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BY TIGHE HOPKINS.

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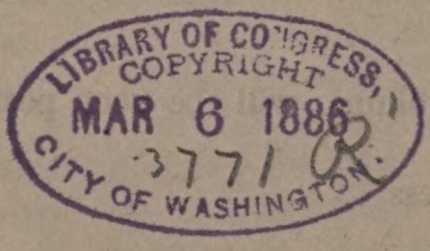

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'TWIXT LOVE AND DUTY.

CHAPTER I.

GOOD NEWS AND BAD.

THE coachman threw the reins upon his smoking horses and got down from the coach. He did it with dignity, though quite unobserved. I am thus particular as to the coachman's dignity because it was out of the common in so fat a man, whose proper girth moreover was swollen by the addition of two waistcoats, two overcoats, and a driving-cape.

Having reached the ground, and pounded it in a tentative way with his foot, he removed his glazed hat by tugging at the brim and tipping it forward at the crown, and, taking out a large handkerchief, scrubbed his head and as much of his neck as was accessible through the thick folds of a comforter.

Mysterious man!

Who has fathomed the depths of a coachman's being? Who can tell me of his private existence? Who knows whether he have any private existence?

A puff of steam rose like a white flag and floated in the air half a mile away, and the train glided round the bend of the hill and approached the station. As it came up the whistle screamed shrilly.

The coachman's brow clouded. He put his hat on with a jerk, and screwed it upon his head with a vicious twist that made him wince. It was his daily penance. Its sequel was equally odd. He went off with a double handful of oats to an ass in a neighboring field, whose invariable habit it was to bray against the engine-whistle. Then he took his reins in hand and mounted to the box again, his great red face charged with an expression of unlimited contempt for railway trains, guards, porters, postmen on bicycles, and all other persons and things that had helped to sup-

plant the race of which he was a survival. These were ancient grievances, but the recent opening of a branch-line in that neighborhood had given a new strength to them.

Only one passenger left the train—a young man of good build and carriage, but with no special pretense to fine looks. The face, however, was essentially a pleasant one. If you had talked for awhile with the owner, you might have remembered it as a face you would willingly encounter again. But with the exception of the eyes, which were dark and singularly steady, there was no feature which could properly be described as handsome. The general expression was self-reliant, as though the young man had long accustomed himself to stand on his own feet.

Being very slightly burdened with luggage, he ran up the steps from the platform, two at a time, and put his pleasant face out at the station-door to look for the coach.

The coachman turned stiffly in his seat, and, recognizing a friend, regained his good-humor and eased his hat.

"Hey, Maister Arnol', zur, 'ow be? 'ow be?"

"Maister Arnol'" pitched his traveling-bag on to the roof of the coach and climbed up after it, selecting as if by preference the most difficult mode of ascent. Seating himself under the broad wing of the coachman, he indicated his readiness to start by a brief, "Go ahead, Job!"

It was only a two-horse coach—and an old-fashioned one at that; but the coachman's flourish at starting was worthy the Jehu of a four-in-hand. Indeed, a man of his bulk and style should have driven nothing less.

The horses pulled with a will, straining at the traces and flinging up their heads with an air as though they were no strangers to oats. On they rattled, a good twelve miles an hour. The pace was exhilarating, and so was the brisk and tingling air. It was about half past three on a crisp December afternoon; and beneath the clear glances of the winter sun Nature seemed to begin anew a calm and ordered life. The fields were freshly released from the grasp of the frost and divested of the snow, except that here and there little crisp patches lay in the hollows, checkering the lush greenery. The eye traveled over the foreground, with the timid cattle lingering by the hedges, and taking in the larger features of the landscape rested at length on the dominant hills beyond, where the snow lay, in sunshine and in shadow, as pure and unruffled as the sky above.

In the course of ten minutes the coachman had exhausted the conversational formulæ proper to the occasion—which embraced a reference to the circumstance that Master Arnold had been six months away in London, a conjecture that Master Arnold had therefore had enough of London for awhile, a casual comment on the health of the neighborhood, and the prospect of the next county meet, a biographical sketch of the new huntsman, and a peroration in which agricultural and other "depressions" were traced to the malt-tax and the cutting-up of the country by "these 'ere wretched trains."

"The malt-tax was repealed eighteen months ago, Job," observed the passenger.

The coachman said he hoped he knew what he was talking about; but appeared after a moment's hesitation to entertain doubts on that point, for he spat with dexterity between his horses' heads, and ceased to talk at all.

Now, this did not displease the passenger. On the contrary, he was glad of it; for he was full of his own thoughts, which were scarcely of a kind that he could share with the coachman.

His name was Arnold Lee, and he had just passed his twenty-third year. He had that morning left his post in a solicitor's office in London for a week's holiday in the country; and the two-horse coach, with Job on the box, was completing for him the final stage of his journey home. "Home" was under the roof-tree of his uncle, the Rev. Paul Brunskill, bachelor vicar of Three Dykes, an exceedingly remote parish in a far western shire.

Young Arnold carried good news, and cherished high hopes.

His heart literally bounded as he recalled triumphantly the words with which he had that morning quitted the presence of his principal.

It was phenomenal—to be called into your chief's private room; to be told by a timid and suspicious man that you had won his confidence; to be offered at three-and-twenty the highest place in the office of a wealthy city solicitor, and told in plain terms that what he proposes out of his great confidence is to admit you, upon trivial conditions, to the actual control of his business. That was something to have done by five years of work. Arnold thrilled with honest satisfaction as he recalled that final

interview with his master, Mr. Rupert Trimble, of Bedford Row. He was unconscious of Job's proximity. He drew himself together with a happy exclamation, and brought his hand with a sounding smack upon—not his knee, but the leather apron of the coach.

And for his hopes? They may be condensed into one little word, and that word a woman's name—Marian. Marian, whom he had not seen for six months, whom he would see again to-morrow, perhaps to-night, and whom this good news, with which his heart was swelling, would gladden; for he dared to think that she was concerned in it almost as much as himself. The promise his employer had given him that morning meant a new step in life for him, an advance in his profession, and every step forward in that was a step nearer to Marian.

To talk about Marian to the coachman was out of the question; nevertheless, Arnold was burning for tidings of her, and so, with a lover's cunning, he went about, and inquired innocently whether Job had seen Lieutenant Dean that day, or the day before, or within the last three days. Lieutenant Lemuel Dean was Marian's uncle, with whom she lived.

But the coachman feigned not to hear. He had excellent ears, as every coachman should have, but, like Victor Hugo, when people pestered him about things that did not interest him, he could be hard of hearing on occasion. He was debating within himself whether it were really possible that the malt-tax could have been repealed eighteen months ago without his knowledge; for he had anticipated that event as a forerunner of the millennium. Consequently he paid no attention to Arnold, who relapsed into silence.

A few miles more, and the scene began to wear a friendly aspect. The fields had a look of home, and the lanes branching off from the high-road, and the tiled roofs of farm-houses, whose comely and hospitable interiors Arnold knew well.

Presently the coachman assured himself, by a process of reasoning which if detailed would fill two pages of this book, that the malt-tax had *not* been repealed, and coming to himself with a "klck-klck" to his horses, he executed a flourish of his whip above the ears of the brown mare, and unbent his countenance.

Still he said nothing about Lieutenant Dean, and Arnold did not want to hear anything else. But how should the coachman know that?

A dull, deep, volcanic sound, somewhere in the region of his belt, presaged intelligence of some sort, after which the coachman cleared his throat and became articulate. Arnold saw that his Jehu was involving matters of deep import within himself, and he checked the further inquiry that was on his lips.

"Joe Bexley's ghoast waan't walk no more this zide o' medzummer."

"Ah—yes, yes—of course; that's a good thing," replied Arnold, as though he had heard the voice of a suddenly vivified Sphinx, for he did not at that moment care twopence for any ghost, quick or slumbering.

"Ye zee, Maister Arnol', 'e laid un vair this time."

"Who laid who fair?" asked Arnold, vaguely and ungrammatically.

"W'y now, w'at be I a-talkin' of but your uncle, Paas'n Paul, a-layin' of Joe Bexley's ghost?"

"Why could not my uncle let Joe Bexley's ghost alone?"

"W'y cud'n Joe Bexley's ghoast let daezent volk aloan? Zee now, Maister Arnol', a zims to me you doan't unnerstan' thikey there ghoast. It be vifty year zens Joe Bexley died an' passed away zudden like. A died o' Zaturdy, week avore rents was due, and Messes Bexley—her was a hard ol' zoul, her was—her thenks it'll be zum trouble a-getten' of um een. Zo her taakes an' pickles un, an' lays un i' underground zellar, which was powerful cold, an' gives out ol' man's bad i' tap chamber, an' likely vor git up 'bout Zundy nex'. Zo rents comed een reg'lar as yertovore, an' w'en zo be as all's een, Messes Bexley, her tells volks as 'ow Joe died night avore. D'ye zee, Maister Arnol'? D'ye zee? Then her takes an' buries un pooblic an' zolum like. But"—and here Job became impressive—"the zperrits—o' zich—will—walk. An' Joe Bexley 'e walked a good un. Walked ol' Peters into vits to-morrer's a week! Zo volks comes, an' they zays, zays volks, Paas'n Paul better lay un i' Marvin's Pond, zee'n as volks caan't stan' thit zort o' thing. An' Paas'n Paul—Maister Arnol'—'e done it, wi' hincantazhun an' zpreaden' of 'ands like!'—and the coachman paused and added in an awful voice—"like Joshuay a-zetten back o' thikey there blessed zun!"

"Had he any assistance?" Arnold asked, after a moment's impressive silence. "Was Lieutenant Dean there?"

But this, like the former question of similar import, was fated to go unanswered, for Job, casting a glance over the country, had his eye and attention arrested by a singular figure in the middle distance.

A furlong off, a low hill, riddled with rabbit-holes, rose in the center of a grass-field. On one side of the hill two rabbits were nibbling the short sward; on the other side a man, lying all his length on the grass, with a gun is his hand, was creeping cautiously to the top; a stealthy terrier at his heels, whose attitude told that every hair was bristling and his eye like a coal.

Job, moved by the instinctive sympathy of one sportsman with another, instantly reined in his horses, that the rattle of the coach might not disturb the game.

Keeping his eyes fixed on the sportsman, he laid a weighty hand on Arnold, and whispered:

"D'ye zee un? Thikey es Paas'n Paul a-ztalkin' rabbuts."

By this time the sportsman, still flat on his waistcoat, had crawled to the brow of the hill. The rabbits spied the brim of his hat and darted for their burrow, but the parson's gun was at his shoulder in a twinkling. Bang! bang! and bunny and his mate turned a double somersault and dropped stone dead three yards from where the shot had struck them. The terrier careered and yelped a pæan, and Job clapped his great mittened paws and shouted; and the sportsman (for he merited the name) picked up the game and strode to where the coach stood at an angle of the road. Of fence and hedge he made light work, seeming to walk right over the one and through the other. He sprung down the last bank and came along to the coach.

Altogether a notable figure, and as this type of Churchman is now (for better or worse) pretty nearly extinct in the land, a minute will not be wasted in taking stock of him. A big round face, of fine mahogany hue, strongly marked features, and a bright, jovial eye, broad forehead, bulging at the eyebrows, square chin, beneath which passed a short thick beard of a dull-gray color; a massive frame, which looked as though the owner might have given odds to Friar Tuck. This was the Rev. Paul Brunskill, Vicar of Three Dykes since "the thirties," for he was nearing his

seventieth year; a cleric of whom you would have said at a glance that no one of the Thirty-nine Articles had ever disagreed with his digestion. He barred the road in front of the coach, his jolly gaitered legs wide apart. The coachman eyed him from top to toe with boundless admiration.

"Welcome home, my boy!" exclaimed the Rev. Paul, in a lusty voice, to his nephew. "I've got your supper here!" and he clapped his hand on the pocket where he had thrust the rabbits, and laughed prodigiously. Job pealed in response. When these two huge men laughed, it was like the trumpeting of Neptune's tritons.

"Keep it up, gentleman; keep it up!" said Arnold. "I haven't heard music like that for six months."

"Nay, a man do 'ave no room vor laugh i' Lunnon," put in Job.

"Well, come down from that; come down, you young cynic," cried the vicar. "I'd be ashamed of riding on a coach after six months on a stool in London. Come down and stretch your legs."

"You'll walk me off them in twenty minutes, uncle."

"More shame for you! Job, my lad, how old shall I be at Easter?"

"Zeventy, Pass'n, zeventy, as be voretold i' Zripture."

"D'ye hear that, young sir? Now, are you coming? Put him down, Job, and call at the Vicarage as you pass. Ann will pay you."

"Well, don't run me too hard, uncle." And Arnold reached the ground with a spring which showed that long confinement in a solicitor's office had not taken much elasticity out of his muscles.

Job sent them off with a blast of his horn (it had belonged in old days to the London coach) which would have shaken a fortress. The horses started off at a gallop, and the vicar stood in the road and hallooed till they were out of sight.

They were now not more than a couple of miles from the Vicarage, but the Rev. Paul was out for his constitutional, and had no notion of curtailing it by taking the shortest way home. A detour through the fields would add another two miles to the distance, and into the fields the vicar struck, Arnold at his side.

"Glad to see you, my boy: very glad to see you. Well,

what's the news? What sort of a show had the Smithfield Club this year?"

"I didn't see it, uncle."

"Humph! I should think not, in boots like those; they'd pinch a Chinawoman. How long does it take you to get them on?"

"Why, uncle, these are Waukenphast's 'easy broad-soled walking-boots.'" And Arnold looked down at his feet cased in boots of flexible leather, which, though strong and sensible, looked almost dandified as they kept step with the vicar's country-made highlows.

"Well, what *have* you seen? Are they going to hang that person who poisoned his cook? You ought to know something about that."

"They hanged him yesterday, uncle."

"Very good; very good—though a cook can be very trying at times. I've had to give Ann notice."

"What, again, uncle?"

"Yes; but she will go this time."

"That depends upon Ann, I expect," thought Arnold, who was not unacquainted with the trials of his uncle's *mênage*.

"So you've been laying a ghost, uncle, I hear."

"Ha! You've heard that already, have you? Where did you hear it?"

"Job is full of it."

"A gossip! But the whole country's full of it. I'll let ghosts walk the village four abreast, at high noon, and gibbering, before I lay another."

"How did you lay him, uncle?"

"Lay him, my lad! In this wise." And raising a massive fist to the level of his head, he brought it down with a sounding thwack into the hardened palm of his other hand. "He won't do it again. But never mind the ghost. Let the perturbed spirit rest, and tell me some news."

"Nay, but tell me your news first, my dear uncle. Remember I've been away six months, and you here all the time. How are the lieutenant and all of them at the Vineyard?"

"Yes, yes, my dear boy, but we've both been apart six months, and there must be news on both sides. Well, well, I will tell you all my news after supper. Do you think I

ought to write to the bishop about that ghost? You shall draw up an official report for me to-morrow, and lay emphasis on the fact that the Sunday after I had given the ghost his quietus the congregation was at least twice as large as usual. Now push on ahead and I'll catch you in two minutes. You can't outstrip me far in those boots."

So speaking, the vicar dived into a cottage they had just reached, where, though he was lost to sight, Arnold could hear him rating the occupant in good set terms for having his chimney choke-full of soot. The lecture closed abruptly with the chink of a coin on the table, and the Rev. Paul came out fuming.

"When the spring comes round, if God be willing, I'll put in hand some rousing sanitary reforms in this place. They're wanted! In all my forty years it's never been so bad. The dullards! I'll have such a putting-in-order that Three Dykes sha'n't know its own face when the thing is done."

There was less spontaneity in this outburst than might be imagined. It was not characteristic of the Rev. Paul to threaten such a violent disturbance of the social calm of his parish; but the fact is that the new bishop had been making his influence felt; and by way of concession to frequent representations from that quarter, the Vicar of Three Dykes had lately got into a way of saying that great reforms were needed and must be put in hand.

The day had fallen in when they reached the Vicarage. A little moon slowly climbing to her high place welcomed the traveler's return with soft sisterly radiance; and the leafless poplars that belted the house on one side were moved by the night breeze to make their grave obeisance. It was deliciously still and restful; and Arnold, spite of his inward impatience touching that matter that has been hinted at, felt the quiet enter into his soul. It was home; and by his side was the rugged faithful old man, his uncle, whom he loved as a father. The low, spreading Vicarage was sharply outlined against the sky, and the light of the moon fell on the window of the corner chamber that had been "Master Arnold's" from a lad.

The click of the gate had been heard in the house; so when they reached the porch there was standing in it a comely, big-boned woman of severe yet not repellent aspect, wearing a good gown of modest color, and holding high in

her hand an old-fashioned lamp, which cast a ring of light about her. This was Ann Hanoch, the major-domo of the Rev. Paul's establishment.

"I think I told you she must certainly go this time," whispered the vicar to his nephew, but not quite so valiantly as before, and, indeed, with a half-relenting severity.

Now, the truth was, that in everything appertaining to the internal economy of the Vicarage Ann Hanoch had her own way. The vicar knew it, and once in every quarter he revolted. Regularly on pay-day the Rev. Paul had an "explanation" with his housekeeper during a *mauvais quart d'heure*, when no quarter was given or taken, and ill-luck befall the hindmost. The battle always came to an end in this fashion: "Very well, Ann; if that is your opinion you had better seek another situation." "Thank you, sir; I will do so." It never got beyond this. As for giving notice seriously to Ann Hanoch—pooh! you might as well have given notice to the Monument. Of this the vicar was aware, otherwise it would never have occurred to him to take so rash a step, for she had been with him for years, was an invaluable housekeeper, and had an incomparable recipe for girdle-cakes.

"Good-evening to you, Ann Hanoch," said the vicar in a sterner tone than he would have ventured on but for the support of Arnold. "I have brought my nephew home, whom I think you know. You will give particular instructions about his boots, which are of a curious prettiness unknown in these parts, and will want more attention than is usually bestowed on mine. My nephew has been good enough to give me some news of London; amongst other items, that they have effectually hanged the person who did his housekeeper to death by poison. I have expressed my approval of the course taken by justice, with a rider to the effect that a housekeeper can be very trying on occasion. But of course poison is poison. My nephew and I are quite ready for supper."

Ann Hanoch took no more notice of this oration than if it had been addressed to the moon. What she did was to plump her lamp down on the settle in the porch, step out with her cap-strings flying, take Arnold by the shoulders, and buss him heartily on both cheeks. Nor did the good lad resent this vigorous salute; on the contrary, he expected it—it was a part of the home-coming. The touch

of his mother's lips was only a dim sweet dream of his childhood.

"Love his boots! I'll have Keturah up an hour earlier to scour 'em."

So much for that ornate harangue on the part of Parson Paul.

Keturah, it may be said in passing, was the only other member of the vicar's household—a wiry slip of a girl who shared Job's admiration for her master, with a vast appetite, and nothing to show in return for her diligent efforts to appease it, whereby the vicar used to say that she reminded him of one of the lean kine of Pharaoh's dream.

"Well, here's a merry Christmas to us all!" said the vicar, when they stood in the hall.

In its excessive neatness, and in the quaintness of its furniture, more especially in the wide and queerly shaped staircase, the hall was a little suggestive of an old Dutch interior. It seemed to Arnold that nothing had been moved since he stood in it last, and as a matter of fact nothing had. But the door of Ann Hanoch's particular cupboard in the passage leading out of it must have stood open, for there was a penetrating odor of spices and rare apples.

Supper smoked in the dining-room—a long, low room with faded-green walls and high-backed wooden chairs without cushions. The vicar commonly supped on cheese and apples, but for this night Ann Hanoch had killed the fatted calf, and had dressed it learnedly.

During the meal the vicar toasted his nephew in cider—he suffered no stronger liquor on his table—and Arnold toasted his uncle, but his heart drank to Marian.

After supper they adjourned to Parson Paul's study—a unique snuggery of its kind. The floor was of smooth brown stone, with no covering but a rush mat for the vicar's feet when he sat to write his sermon at the table. There was an open hearth, which held a fire of peat and logs, the smoke from which had well seasoned the raftered ceiling. There were deep recesses in the room, in one of which stood the vicar's gun and fishing-tackle, and from the ceiling hung samples of herbs and seeds and bulbs in packets. The literary furniture of the room was not excessive, and the theological volumes, though sterling of their kind, were a little crowded by treatises, new and old,

on the gun and the rod, together with a posse of works of a martial tenor, for the vicar loved a tale of battle.

"Now then, boy," said the Rev. Paul when he had spread himself in his chair, with one leg thrust against the fire-place, "let us talk of your affairs. How are you prospering? Is Trimble still satisfied with you?"

This opening was traditional. The first sitting in the study, on the occasion of his visits home, was always devoted to a discussion of Arnold's professional prospects. It was, truth to say, a subject which the vicar approached with no particular relish. He had an antipathy for the law and its professors which was partly constitutional and partly the outcome of a series of trying encounters with the local practitioner Hogben, who had figured prominently in an agitation against tithes. The vicar had always come off best in these encounters, but his anger against the man of parchments was not stayed. He had been grievously disappointed when Arnold announced his intention to make his start in life in a solicitor's office, talked about the folly of putting a blood-horse to drag the parish hearse, and so on. But since Arnold had gone into the work with a will, and showed unmistakably that he meant to advance himself, Parson Paul was too good an uncle to discourage him, besides which he knew his nephew for a young man whom it was uncommonly difficult to discourage. So he never failed, on the first evening of Arnold's visits home, to put on Nestor's cap, and a good grace, and inquire with a great show of interest what satisfaction he was giving to his principal.

Arnold told him what the reader has already learned. Now, this was a substantial benefit which the vicar could not fail to appreciate.

"You are a fortunate fellow, Master Arnold—yes, and a good and deserving fellow too. And Trimble, he's another good fellow. You shall carry him my compliments and a brace of hares when you return."

Then the vicar delivered a short homily on perseverance and its sure reward, and broke off in the middle, saying he would finish the subject in his Sunday sermon.

"And now, Uncle Paul," said Arnold, when the vicar had done with his homily, "you know all that I want to hear from you. It is long since I have had any news of

our friends at the Vineyard. I want to know how Marian is."

At this the vicar looked a little uncomfortable, and hesitated before he replied, which strengthened a suspicion in Arnold's mind that there was something on this subject which his uncle had been unwilling to communicate.

Ordinarily, the vicar's first news when Arnold came home was of the Vineyard and its inmates, between whom and the people at the Vicarage there existed ties of the closest description. The two houses were divided in space by some three hundred yards, and no more. The friendship between Lieutenant Dean and Parson Brunskill dated from their college days, nearly half a century before, and the loves of Marian and Arnold were coeval with their childhood. What was the reason that the vicar had been so silent on this of all subjects in the world?

After a moment's pause, the old man said:

"I am afraid, my boy, that you must prepare yourself for a little disappointment in that quarter—nay, now, don't look so scared about it; I hope it is nothing serious. But the truth is that Marian is not home, and the reason of that is that she is not well. The lieutenant has been sent for to Cambridge to the college to see her."

"Ill! Marian ill, and I not know of it! Why did you not write to me, uncle?"

"Well, well, perhaps I should have done so. But I kept it back because I still hoped that it would turn out to be something quite trifling, and that Lemuel would have returned with her before you came."

"You *hoped* that, uncle? Then you do not know?"

"Well, no; Lemuel has not written to me."

"Because Marian is very ill, uncle, very ill. I am sure of it," said Arnold, quite tremulously, for this sudden blow had completely unnerved him.

"I think not, my boy," answered his uncle. "If there had been serious illness Lemuel would have sent me word at once, I am persuaded. Why, bless me, it was only the day before yesterday that he went."

"If they do not return to-morrow," exclaimed Arnold, "I shall go to Cambridge."

"Most certainly they will return to-morrow, impatient fellow!" retorted his uncle. "And I shall hear from Lemuel by the morning post."

"Uncle, we must know," Arnold insisted, with painful emphasis; "we must know. I am convinced that this is a very serious matter. I will take train to Cambridge myself if we hear nothing in the morning."

"Tut! My headlong friend, they don't want you. You are as impulsive as you were at ten. They would send you packing home on the moment. Young fellows like you are not allowed within the precincts of a ladies' college, and a very proper thing. Be a man about this, and listen to me. You will see them to-morrow."

But Arnold's peace had been reft from him. It was a sudden and a keen disappointment, and smote him sorely. The fears that suggested themselves he could not quell: Marian should have been home from college a week ago; it must be something very serious that had not only kept her back but had obliged her uncle to be summoned to her. All the pleasure of Arnold's home-coming had been dashed, and deep in his heart there were misgivings that worse was to follow. He went up to his room with a miserable feeling of unrest, and fell on his knees and prayed.

He would have prayed yet more fervently—were it possible—if he could have seen what was taking place at that very moment in one of Marian Dean's little rooms at Cambridge. The lieutenant was sitting there, very pale and anxious, listening to a physician, who was speaking to him the gravest possible words. It was of Marian that they were spoken, but she did not hear them, for she was lying on her bed in the chamber adjoining. What was said at that conference, and what came of it, shall be told to the reader in proper course.

CHAPTER II.

THE NIGHT COACH.

THE candle spluttered and went out. Still Arnold stood beside his window, looking out over the little church-yard of Three Dykes toward where the cottage called the Vineyard was half hidden by the winter trees. At last, with the sigh of a spirit utterly possessed by forebodings, disappointment, and weariness, he resolved to go to bed.

Tired out, he fell asleep, but it was a restless, troubled

sleep, and full of dreams; and in a couple of hours he awoke again. There he lay, unquiet, and full of the fever of anxiety, wearying for the dawn which would not come one quarter of an hour sooner to lighten a sleepless lover.

Ay, indeed, and if nature should take to shifting her times on this account, there would be no trusting her any longer; for there be many of these poor lovers keeping their painful vigil every night of the year; and have been, since Jacob lay within earshot of Laban's flock and pined for Rachel.

Arnold furbished up a glimmering light, and would read, he thought. Nay, but the pretense was doubly painful. Every page was printed up and down with the name of Marian, and always, as it seemed, in pale and sickly letters, that could not stand upright.

Should he turn out and make the best of it? No, for as he was thinking of that, he slept again. When he woke next time and saw the room just growing into distinctness around him, the sight gave him a feeble sense of better cheer. He rose and looked out, but the light was only that of the moon, her face half hidden by driving clouds. It was past four o'clock. There was no sign of life without, no sound within.

But Arnold had had enough of bed: so he dressed himself, and going down noiselessly, undid the loosely bolted door, and let himself out.

Snow was falling lightly in single and casual flakes. The air was rough and wet and biting. It was nearly dark, for the moon labored amongst thick clouds. Nature has no welcome for man at this shivering and uncanny hour. She wants none of him; the night is hers; let him keep abed whilst she frolics with the witches.

Arnold went forward with a firm but dogged foot, not knowing precisely where he was going nor how far; seeking vaguely the scenes that reminded him most of the absent one. The moan and fret of the distant waves was carried past him on the wind, and sometimes he could hear overhead the strong beating of a sea-bird's wings as it made for the waters. Going hither and thither, with the snow falling faster and the clouds gathering more darkly in the sky, he found himself at length outside the boundary hedge of Lieutenant Dean's little homestead, the Vineyard. Arnold paused a moment, and cast a wistful look at the cottage,

but it was dark and chill, and he went on again, and walked a good hour more before he turned and began to retrace his steps.

The night and the day were already changing places. The sky passed from black to gray, and that subtle silent transformation commenced which tells that the dawn is near. A soft flush came in the east, it deepened into a red and purple flame, and a wintery sun burst over the white and sleeping fields. It was full day when Arnold reached the Vicarage again.

I doubt whether the Rev. Paul had ever cheated the night as Arnold had done on this occasion; certainly not for a similar reason. But he was no sluggard, and winter or summer he had always made the round of his yard and garden before breakfast. Arnold came upon him reciting Homer to his pigs.

"Hullo!" said the vicar; "not breakfast-time for a long while yet. What brings you out so early?"

"I was out long ago. Has the post come yet?"

"Post! No. D'ye think we want to get up at day-break to read letters? The post won't be here for another three hours. Let's us go and see if Ann will give us breakfast half an hour earlier."

This Ann declined to do, on the ground that the vicar might be disposed hereafter to regard the breach of custom in the light of a precedent. So the gentlemen were fain to content themselves with an assurance that breakfast would be ready at the usual hour.

"A great woman, Ann; and about as movable as a light-house; shall I ever replace her?" observed the vicar, as he applied a match to his study fire. "But what put it into your head that she would give us breakfast half an hour earlier?"

"It was in your head, not mine, uncle."

"Was it? Well, we'd better not ask her again. Now, for the day; let us see. I have to make a round this morning; will you come with me? No, you're out of sorts; better stay at home and do something here. There's that report for the bishop, or you might lop some firewood, and the cabbages wouldn't be the worse for a touch of the hoe. Do I smell coffee? I believe she has got the breakfast after all."

Arnold continued to flag, notwithstanding his uncle's efforts to rouse him. His uncle guessed the cause, and de-

bated within himself whether it were best to leave him for awhile to his own resources. But he concluded, "Not at all. Set him to work. When I'm out of sorts myself I saw logs for firewood." This was taking what is more or less improperly called a practical and common-sense view of the situation.

To Arnold he said, when breakfast was over, "I don't think I'll take you round the village, my boy. Can't show Three Dykes such a long face as yours at Christmas-time; they'd find it worse than the ghost. Leave you to yourself, though, and you'll mope like a sick hen. Come into the study. Now here's pen and paper. Set to on that report, and if a notion occurs to you for a sermon jot it down when you've finished my defense for the bishop. Now I think you'll be all right. If you feel more cheerful in an hour's time come and meet me." And the vicar took his visiting-hat and went out.

The Rev. Paul Brunskill was a Churchman of an antique pattern. A good and faithful man according to his lights, but his lights were not of the newest, and his notions of duty, sound enough as far as they went, were something less than severe. Clerics of his stamp have perhaps had their day. The modern Church has small room for them. One such remains here and there, in quiet far-away parishes, seeming by a miracle to have escaped suppression under the hard law of the survival of the fittest; interesting at this day chiefly from the standpoint of the archæologist. A placid and Bœotian parish was well satisfied with the Rev. Paul's ministrations, but it was long since he had been in touch with the world outside, and he was little familiar with the varied forms which clerical activity has taken in recent years in the great centers of population.

In the Georgian era such a clerk would have stood a good chance of preferment, but in these days of manifold and multiplied energy in spheres within and without the Church he had not succeeded in attracting the favorable notice of his ecclesiastical superiors. His friends had put him, when still a young man, into this small, poor living of Three Dykes; in middle age he awoke to find himself stranded, and no step upward or onward had he made since then.

It was not in him to feel bitterness, and what slight regrets he might have experienced in the distant days when

he first became aware of his hopeless isolation had long since vanished. He schooled himself into contentment, and grew fond of his little cure.

He married the men and women whom he had baptized as infants; he buried their fathers, and himself became the father of the whole community.

He was as a Patriarch in Israel, or the father-king of a Greek state in the heroic age. No authority restrained him, but his despotism was paternal.

He made his rounds twice a week, on the days that best suited his own convenience. Thus, if he said to himself on Monday night, "I'll go the rounds to-morrow," and Tuesday's sky promised a good day's fishing, he would fish on Tuesday, and make his parochial rounds on Wednesday. For the parish to grumble at this would have been absurd, for a good day's angling was followed by a liberal distribution of the spoils.

Well, here the old man was in his visiting-hat and second-best coat, setting out on his rounds this winter's morning, within a few days of Christmas-day.

Three Dykes had a sort of negative character of its own, by which I mean that it possessed few of the institutions one looks for in a venerable village. Indeed, it was hardly a village at all in the larger sense of the term. A hundred years before there was found in it neither ale-house, grocer, baker, corn-mill, tailor, shoe-maker, blacksmith, apothecary, nor midwife; nor was it much more liberally furnished at the period with which this story is concerned.

The church had a low tower and a pitched roof, and three stoves to warm it.

"I'll write a history of Three Dykes one of these days," said the vicar to himself, as he turned into the straggling street. He had made the same remark any time these twenty years, but the work was yet to do.

He presented himself at the cottage of William Green, demanded to see William, and fined him sixpence for keeping his hat on in church.

"It was a piece of vile contempt, William, and shall be made an example of. You will pay sixpence into the poor-box. If your head is cold, sit against the stove."

He knocked at the door of George Devenish, and found George in bed with the rheumatism.

"George," said the vicar, sternly, "you are too young

a man to have come fairly by the rheumatism. There has been more poaching lately than ever, I'm told. I caught a poacher once, and put my stick about his bones. Get well of that rheumatism, George. Wouldn't take my walks at night, if I were you."

He came upon a child playing truant under the very shadow of the school-house; in fact, with his back against it.

"What's this? Playing truant the day before the holidays! Get in with you—get in. Who d'ye think ever got any learning into his head by bumping his back against the school-house?"

He called on Mrs. Cordukes and found her in tears. Death had just removed her old friend and neighbor, Mrs. Higgins, but it was not for that she wept, but for the unkindness with which Mrs. Higgins, the day before her death, had received Mrs. Cordukes's last request.

"I did ax zhe if zhe chanc'd across ma James o' th' ither zide, be zure an' tell en thikey there mor'gage es ahl zettled; and her zays she've gat better things'n that to thenk on."

"Well, well, come now, Mrs. Cordukes, this is foolish. What is the mortgage to James now? And do you think Mrs. Higgins could go clanking through heaven to find your James? Dear! This is a foolish generation."

And so the vicar went from house to house amongst his people, playing the comforter here, the medicine-man there, the counselor and lawgiver everywhere.

Arnold was "left sitting," with his feet on the rush mat, his knees under the table, in the vicar's study. Ink and paper were before him, and he was in full possession of his uncle's wishes on the subject of the report to the bishop. But he did not write it. He did not make an attempt to write it. The poor fellow was desperately out of sorts. He could not rid his mind of the belief that Marian was seriously ill, far away from home; and while he yearned for tidings of her he dreaded to receive them.

Surely the post was late? He was very glad of that; he was very angry at it. He did not know *what* he felt; his mind was a mere chaos of doubt, anxiety, and fear.

He pushed the paper away and went out, walked up and down the garden, turned into the yard, pulled off his coat,

and set to work to hack up logs for firewood. The vicar would have said "Bravo!" had he seen him.

He felt the better for the exercise, and stuck to the ax till he perspired at every pore. He had raised a goodly pile of logs when he finished. He ought then to have gone back to the report, but he did not.

The post came just as he was adding the last log to the pile, and he went hurriedly to take the bag; unlocked it, and glanced at the contents. But there was no letter from Lieutenant Dean. He threw the letters down with an impatient exclamation, and set off to walk to the Vineyard. "There may be a letter there," he thought. But there was none. The servant had received no advices whatever from her master or his niece; had heard nothing since the lieutenant went away; could not say when they would return.

Arnold turned and went home, worse at heart than ever.

In these few hours his feelings had deepened vastly. He felt toward Marian as he had never felt before. On his side there had been a strong and single-hearted love ever since he began to be a man; yet a steady and a quiet love. It had not been demonstrative, scarcely even had it openly declared itself. That Marian knew of it he could not doubt, yet he had never asked to be accepted as her lover. Was it necessary?

They had been side by side since children; had formed the same tastes in childhood, had cherished the same hopes and fancies; and the partial separation brought about when Arnold went to begin life in town, and Marian went full of ambition to college, had not divided them in thought or heart. Long ago there had taken place that complete interchange of feeling and emotion which results in a sort of spiritual identity.

What need that Arnold should say to Marian, "I love you?" But he knew now that his love was a passion, strong, and all-possessing. Think, then, of his disquiet.

He turned out of the lane in which the lieutenant's cottage stood, went through a field or two, and struck into the high-road, not caring to go in search of his uncle, and in no particular hurry to reach home.

But the Rev. Paul was a person whom you were always pretty certain to meet when and where you least expected to encounter him.

Arnold came upon him a quarter of a mile from the Vicarage, cheapening a turkey with a man who was taking a drove to the market town.

"Strange," said the parson to his nephew, "but I quite forgot till I met this man that we hadn't a turkey for Christmas. What d'ye think of this bird—is there a meal on him?"

The vicar had a keen relish for a bargain, and always drove a smart one.

He bought the turkey cheap, and drove it home at the point of his stick. In the yard he handed it over to Keturah, who took a gross delight in slaying birds for the table.

"Finished the report?" asked the vicar, when he had seen the turkey bestowed in the coop.

"H'm! I fancy that matter will want a good deal of thought," replied his nephew; but it was a weak evasion.

"Well, I believe you're right," said the vicar. "It's not a thing you can dash off in a hurry. I'll tell you what, we'll walk over to the kennels this afternoon and have a look at the hounds; we can talk it over on the way."

They walked to the kennels, saw the hounds, and discussed the report. It was growing dark when they set out for home. Half a mile from the Vicarage, Arnold gave his uncle the slip, and went over to the Vineyard.

It was a fool's errand, he knew. Nothing could have happened since the morning; there could be no fresh news, for there were no means by which it could have come.

As he neared the cottage he heard the sound of wheels upon the road. He stopped and listened. It was the coach, for he caught an echo of Job's strong blast on his horn.

He climbed the bank, and far down the road in the gathering dusk he saw the coach approaching. A feeling half hopeful came over him. He strained his eyes to see what passengers Job carried. But it was too dark. He could discern no more than the dim outline of the coach looming far down the road.

If there were passengers for the Vineyard Job would stop at the corner. The coach came clattering along. At the corner Job reined in his horses with a jerk.

Arnold ran forward at full speed. As he neared the coach a voice called from the inside, and Job turned his

horses and drove down the lane toward the cottage. He had never driven off the high-road before. But it was impossible Marian should be coming home in this way! The coach passed Arnold, and went on, and stopped outside the gate of the lieutenant's cottage. Arnold was there almost as soon.

A tall thin figure, cloaked from head to foot, got down from the coach. It was the old lieutenant, very grave and silent, with an anxious look on his face.

He did not at first recognize Arnold, but some one else did.

"Uncle, it is Arnold!" a faint but most sweet voice exclaimed from the interior of the coach, as Arnold stepped into the light of its lamp.

He was already at the door, and as Marian raised herself with an effort, and he saw how complete was the wreck of her physical powers, he lifted her unresistingly, with her cloak all gathered about her, and carried her into the house.

This, at any rate, was better than suspense.

Six months—a moment of youthful life—and it was as when the fierce July sun blights at a stroke the bloom and freshness of your brightest flower. The leaf and petal remain, but the current of their life is stayed, and death is imaged in their drooping helplessness.

CHAPTER III.

WHAT THE DOCTORS SAID.

He carried her into the little parlor, and laid her on the sofa. The coming of the lieutenant and his niece had not been announced, yet everything was in readiness. The candles were lighted, the fire was ruddy, the sofa was drawn before it.

"Lie there, and do not stir; we will do everything for you," said Arnold; and she gave him a quiet smile, and an unspoken gratitude shone in her tender eyes.

Anxious as he was, it was a delight to move about her, to unwrap her, to put the pillows about her head—to do a hundred little things for her comfort. And he did them so gently and noiselessly.

"One would think you had been training for a nurse," she said, with the ghost of her old laugh.

The old servant, who had carried Marian as a babe, looked so scared to see her young mistress in this sad plight that Marian had to assure her that she was much better, and really only a little tired. "See, there is my uncle," she said. "He is very hungry, and wants his supper. Look to him, Phœbe; Arnold shall be my squire to-night, and get me all I want."

She spoke cheerily, but Arnold looked at the grave face of the lieutenant, and read there a tale which contradicted his niece's words.

"What must we do for her, lieutenant?" he asked.

The lieutenant passed his hand nervously across his eyes, and answered, in his slow, indecisive manner, "Eh? Yes; she must be very quiet. I think, my dear, that I must not let you talk—that is what the doctor said."

"The doctor must be obeyed, Uncle Lemuel. You hear, Arnold, that I am not to talk to you. But I may talk to-morrow, uncle, may I not?"

"To-morrow, dear? Yes; if you sleep well to-night you may, I think, talk to-morrow—a little. But you are to be very quiet. Has Phœbe lighted the fire upstairs?"

"The fire is lighted, sir."

"Then, my dear, as the fire is lighted, I think it would be better we should get you to bed at once. That is what the doctor said."

"The doctor must be obeyed, dear uncle. Say good-night to me, Arnold, and keep all your news for to-morrow."

"I shall carry you to your room first," he answered; and she let him lift her from the sofa and carry her up the stairs, and at the chamber-door he gave her into Phœbe's hands.

"You must not look so sad and solemn," she said, with her sweet smile. "Now that I have come home I shall be well again at once. Good-night, Arnold, good-night; come early to-morrow. How much we have to tell each other!"

The lieutenant, after watching them up the stairs, had gone back to the parlor and seated himself mechanically in his high-backed chair at the corner of the fire-place. He seemed quite dazed, and took no notice of his supper,

though it was many hours since he had eaten. The fingers of one hand moved in a vague, tremulous way in the folds of his long blue cloak which hung over the back of the chair.

Arnold went up to him. There was a bond of warm affection between these two.

"Lieutenant," he said, "you are very much distressed. Tell me faithfully what do you think of Marian."

"Eh? Not to-night. No; I seem not to be able to talk to-night. It has come upon me so suddenly. To-morrow, to-morrow; and bring Uncle Paul with you; I have much to say to him."

"But she is a little better? she says she is better."

"She does not know—she does not know. I must talk to Paul about what the doctor said. Come you both over to-morrow. I shall be more capable then; to-night I am quite astray."

And the lieutenant, whose mind always hung fire a little, and who seemed completely prostrated this evening, gave Arnold his hand, but he did not go with him to the door, as his general habit was.

Arnold went out alone and returned to the Vicarage.

"I'll shoot no more rabbits for *you!*" said the vicar when he presented himself. "They are boiled to rags! Where have you been star-gazing now?"

"They have come home, Uncle Paul."

"Ha! didn't I say they would come to-day? How is she?"

"She seems completely broken down."

"As bad as that? The poor child! Well, I always denounced that college. And Lemuel—how is Lem?"

"He is terribly upset; he has scarcely a word to say."

"Knocked over, eh? Poor Lem! He never could keep his head in bad weather. Does he want me?"

"Yes; he wants to talk with you to-morrow."

"We'll go the first thing after breakfast. Poor Marian! But don't look so sad, my boy; she'll soon get well at home. She has been working too hard; it's the examination for degree that has done it. What a nice-looking girl like Marian want's with a degree is more than I can imagine. If she had taken half the trouble to find a decent husband —yourself, for instance—I'd have thought better of it. Ring for the rabbits."

Breakfast the next morning was a very brief meal with Arnold; he was impatient to start before the vicar had well done with his second egg.

"I'll leave you to follow, uncle," said Arnold, who knew that the old man would find a score of small matters to attend to before he was ready to go.

"I'll be up with you at the turnip-field, or I'll go without my dinner," replied the vicar, without looking up from his egg.

The sun was just kindling the fields; it was a perfect winter's morning. On such a morning Arnold and Marian had gone a-skating hardly a year ago. To-day the blue smoke curled from the chimney of the room where Marian lay on the couch before the fire.

She had insisted on going down after breakfast. Arnold would be there early, she said, and she meant to receive him in state.

She was nestling, swan-like, amongst her pillows. There was a winning and a penetrating grace in her manner which belonged entirely to herself. She was full three years younger than Arnold—a woman almost, yet still a girl, and the clear spring fragrance of girlhood about her, which is like nothing so much as the smell of woodland violets. Ay, and there was a woodland purity in her nature, for she had looked on the open sky all her life, and on trees and wild flowers, and all natural things. There was a primrose tenderness in her complexion; her eyes were a deep brown, changing their shade often in changing lights; and her hair was brown too, and of so fine a texture that if you had not seen it loose on her neck as Arnold saw it that morning, you would never have guessed the wealth of it.

Arnold entered in anxious mood, but the first night's rest at home had refreshed her, and she was brighter, and rallied him on his solemn air.

"Here's a fearful personage! You look as if you had seen Mr. Brunskill's ghost, Arnold. By the bye, he must tell me about the ghost himself; I have had Phœbe's version, but that won't do at all. Have you brought Mr. Brunskill with you, Arnold?"

"He will be here immediately. But, Marian, are you better—are you really better?"

"Don't I look better?"

"Yes, you do indeed! But, you know, that does not satisfy me; I want to hear you say it. Tell me just how you feel."

"He talks to me like the doctor! Well, you shall be the doctor, Arnold, if you like—Dr. Lee, the brilliant young practitioner, whom all the Faculty are jealous of because he is so much cleverer then they. Now, feel my pulse and take my temperature, and then shake your head and say the case exhibits such peculiar features that you can not pronounce on it immediately!"

"Stop, stop! you must not talk so rapidly. The doctor forbids it. He prescribes repose, and a few words at a time, and quietly, because there is so much to be said. Now I am going to drop the doctor, and you are going to tell me everything. You can't think what a miserable fellow I have been since I came home."

"And all about me, Arnold?"

"All about you, Marian."

"Who told you that I was ill, Arnold?"

"Uncle Paul. But it was not from him that I should have heard it first, Marian."

"You mean that I ought to have written to you, or Uncle Lemuel ought to have written. But he did not know it any sooner than Mr. Brunskill, and a week ago I did not know it myself."

"It happened as suddenly as that?"

"It seemed to come in a moment. You know I was working very hard for the degree. I worked night and day; I seemed to want no rest; I had never felt so strong in my life. But three weeks ago I began to lose my sleep at night, just as you did when you were reading for your last examination. There was nothing but that, and even the sleeplessness did not seem to matter, for I worked closer than ever. At the last I seemed to have double strength. For three days I read as I had never read before, and then —I don't know any more. The girl I was reading with came to my room on the morning of the fourth day, and found me on the floor insensible."

"Ah, but it was wicked, very wicked of them to let you work so," said Arnold.

His eyes had filled with tears, and he took one of her hands in his and held it close.

"No one was to blame, Arnold. There were others who

read quite as hard as I did. If I had slept, no harm would have come."

"But when they found you insensible, Marian?"

"Well, then the doctor came, and Uncle Lemuel was sent for."

"And what did the doctor say?"

"I think he said more than he need have done. He did not say very much to me, but he frightened poor Uncle Lemuel dreadfully. I think he told him that I must be sent away to France or to Madeira, or somewhere else. He might just as well have said to New Zealand, for of course it is absurd. And he told me that I was not to read at all, which is sadder than anything."

Arnold looked exceedingly grave. He doubted whether Marian had been told everything. The effort of talking had exhausted her, and now she lay back with the color passing from her cheeks and a faint moisture on her forehead.

"Dear Marian, if the doctor says you must go away for a time, you must go."

"Arnold, you know it is not possible. Uncle Lemuel has already done more for me than he can afford. While I have been at college and Lucy has been at school in France, Uncle Lemuel has been very poor at home. He has taken to his old military cloak again this winter because he would not buy himself a new one. And I see that he has not put up the new arbor he wanted in the garden, nor the fence round the paddock. No, he shall not spend any more on me."

Arnold was silent. He was putting to himself the bitter question, What was to be done supposing it were necessary for Marian to go away, and there were no means found of sending her?

Marian saw the trouble in his face, and made haste to say:

"Dr. Grey is coming this afternoon. He knows me much better than the Cambridge doctor, and he will say that a little rest at home is all I need. See, there is Mr. Brunskill with Uncle Lemuel. Go and say, Arnold, that I want him to show me how he laid the ghost."

The vicar and the lieutenant were pacing the narrow path of the garden. The mild wrinkled features of the lieutenant wore a strange and anxious look, and he passed

his hand frequently over his soft gray eyes, which was his habit when distressed.

"So that is the opinion of the Cambridge man, is it, Lem?" asked the vicar.

"Yes, Paul. That is what he said. He told me that the night before we left. He said the case left no room for doubt."

"You shouldn't have sent her there, Lem. No place for her. I'd have taught her myself."

"It is fifty years since you and I were at college, Paul."

"Tut! I take it, Lemuel, that the fundamentals are still the same. If they are not, so much the worse. I tell you I would have taught her handsomely."

"Well, I am obliged to you, Paul; I am obliged to you. But it is all too late now."

"I will not hear you say it. This Cambridge man, I don't trust him. He did not know the girl; he judged at a glance. Wait until Grey comes. You will see what he will say."

"Ay, ay; we will wait for confirmation. But suppose that Grey says—"

"Uncle Paul, you are to come at once and show Marian how you laid the ghost," called Arnold.

"Beshrew the ghost! Has Marian heard of it too? An untimely specter! I'll come, I'll come."

"Well, lieutenant, what have you told my uncle?" asked Arnold, as he joined the lieutenant in the garden.

"We are waiting for Dr. Grey, Arnold. He is coming, you know, this afternoon. Paul thinks we need arrive at no decision until he has been. She is brighter to-day, eh? What do you think, Arnold?"

"Yes, she is brighter, certainly. But I should like to know exactly what the Cambridge doctor said."

"You shall know, Arnold; you shall know. But let us wait for Dr. Grey. He has known her from a child, you see."

They had not long to wait, though Arnold chafed because the minutes were not seconds.

Dr. Grey came at lunch-time. The lieutenant received him, and had five minutes' conversation with him in his study. Then he took him to Marian in the parlor. He was with her for an hour. When he left, Arnold took his place

at once, and the doctor went to the garden and was in consultation for some time with the lieutenant and the vicar.

"What did he say, Marian?" was Arnold's eager question.

"Not very much, Arnold, after all."

"Not very much in an hour!"

"I mean not much about myself. He was telling me stories most of the time. He does not think me a very bad case, I am sure, for he only said, 'We shall see,' when I told him the Cambridge doctor's dictum about my having to be sent away. But he said I had been up long enough for to-day, and that you were to carry me upstairs again at once."

When Arnold was walking home with his uncle, and not until then, he learned the doctor's fiat.

"I had better tell you at once, my boy, what Grey said to us." And there was a kindly and almost gentle touch in the vicar's voice as he spoke. "It is very grave news indeed; very sad news—for you, and for all of us. Grey says the Cambridge doctor did not overstate the case in the least. Marian must leave England at once, or she can not live six months."

CHAPTER IV.

AN INSPIRATION.

THERE is a terrible situation in a story by Poe of a prisoner who wakes in the dead of night to find that the four walls of his prison are closing in on him. He stands in the midst—helpless, gazing, while death creeps to him. A fate as resistless seemed to confront Arnold. He had, you see, made Marian's fate his own.

In the midst of some thickets, not more than a mile and a half from the Vicarage, was a wild and lonely place called Canvey's Cave. In this solitude, centuries before, a fanatic had buried himself from men. Thorns and nettles had covered the face of the hermit's lair, and the ground all about was broken and rocky. The place was girt with stunted and twisted trees. It was the most solitary spot for miles round. Few of the peasant people went near it by day; none of them would pass it by night. In front of

the cave was an even strip of ground the length of a sentry's beat.

And here was Arnold.

To this place his wanderings had led him when he fled, as it were, on hearing the words that seemed the doom of Marian and himself. Night was falling, but he neither knew nor cared. Restless and wrestling in spirit, he paced to and fro across the bit of level ground.

The kaleidoscope of the future had been broken all in a moment. There was nothing before him but this—that Marian must go from England at once, or she could not live six months. This summed up all. To this small, hard issue Arnold's universe was reduced. He felt the responsibility his own, yet was powerless to move. And she must die, for she could not go from England.

None knew better than Arnold that the lieutenant, her nearest relative, was powerless to help her. Marian's education had crippled him. "I have nothing to leave her," the old man had said years before. "At least I will fit her to make her own way when she is alone." And for this end he had spent three fourths of his narrow means; had denied himself, and lived hardly, caring nothing if only a future might be secured to Marian.

And this was wasted; for Marian, in her zeal to repay her uncle, had brought herself to the brink of physical ruin.

There was no way out of it; there was neither retreat nor advance. It was as when a traveler has lost his way amongst trackless mountains in an unknown region; he has climbed to the edge of a precipice; he can go no step higher, and descent is impossible.

It was pitiful to see how Arnold agonized. He clinched his hands, and writhed—not in spirit only, but in body.

Night came down rapidly. The moon would not rise for full two hours, and it was now almost dark. The trees creaked in the wind, but all else was silent.

Arnold quivered under the strain of his feelings. A horrible sense of desertion came over him. It seemed as though Marian were being abandoned, and he with her.

To quit England at once, or die in six months! And no way of going, and no one to help her! He groaned aloud, and an inarticulate prayer shaped itself within him that a way might be found to save her, and that he might be the instrument. They say that prayer like this, where the

self-effacement is complete, wing the swiftest path to Heaven. But the very heavens seemed obdurate, as he searched the present and the future for some atom of encouragement. What was the present or the future to him? He would surrender them both to save Marian. Would be a bond-slave if she might only live!

What was that? A bond-slave—to save Marian!

Arnold stood still in his walk, arrested, as it were. The thought took form in his mind, almost in the instant of its entering. He was illumined by it, and it sent a glow through him, from head to foot.

Yes, he could do it! There was sacrifice in it—such sacrifice as youth and love might glory in with equal triumph.

CHAPTER V.

TO TOWN BY THE NIGHT TRAIN.

"I'LL give ye two shillings, and no more," said the vicar.

The messenger looked doubtfully at the telegram in his hand, uncertain whether to part with it at this price.

"Ha zed I shude ax vor tu an' drippence, Paas'n," answered the queen's representative, at length.

"You may ask for anything you like, but you'll get no more than two shillings from me. Don't you know how far you have carried the telegram?"

"Ekal tu vour mile an' a haf, Paas'n."

"Four miles to an inch. Will ye step it with me?"

"You'm a girt man vur your joak, Paas'n," chuckled the messenger.

"No, I am not a great man for my joke. Ask any one in Three Dykes if I joke above once a month. Now, here's your two shillings, and give me the telegram. If that's my nephew coming up the road tell him there's a telegram waiting for him. Off with you!"

"A telegram for me, uncle?" and without staying to hear how the messenger had demanded threepence too much for carrying it, and how the vicar had positively refused to pay it, Arnold took the telegram and went on into the house. The vicar went after him in some excitement. Telegrams were formidable interruptions of the placidity of life in Three Dykes.

Arnold took out the telegram and read it, and his heart leaped within him.

It contained no more than a brief question from Mr. Trimble respecting the business of a client. Arnold might have dispatched by wire an answer of equal brevity, and settled the matter out of hand. But to realize the notion that had flashed through his brain half an hour ago it was necessary that he should return to town at once. How to excuse himself to his uncle was the question that had perplexed and well-nigh baffled him as he walked home from Canvey's Cave; but here was his answer ready made.

He turned to his uncle, and said, as demurely as possible, "I must go to town at once, uncle."

"To town? To-night? What d'ye mean? Why, you've barely come out of it!"

"That's true, uncle; but I must go back again to-night." And the sly fellow tapped the telegram with his finger as much as to say, "Here are my commands, you see. I have no alternative."

"What's the telegram?" inquired his uncle next.

"It is from Mr. Trimble. Here, read it, uncle."

"Oh, from Trimble. Well, if 'tis Trimble's business, I suppose you'd best go. But how you're to get to London to-night, I don't know."

Arnold, however, had already planned his journey.

"It is hardly seven o'clock," he said. "A quick horse would just catch the night train for me. I shall run up to John Finch and ask him to drive me with his black mare; she can do the ten miles in an hour."

In less time than it took the vicar to collect his wits and give birth to an appropriate reflection, Arnold had told Ann Hanoch that his box must be packed immediately, and was on his way to the Shepherd's Crook Inn, a couple of hundred yards down the road.

The landlord and genius of the Shepherd's Crook was young John Finch, known to an admiring circle of friends as "Varmer Jan Vinch," an athlete of more than local fame, who had a grand Irish mare, which none but he could drive. The neighbors said of Black Sal that she could "lick tha railraud;" but so far as concerned the speed of the local trains in those parts this was a poor compliment.

To Varmer Jan Vinch Arnold went in his need.

The bar of the Shepherd's Crook had its posse of drowsy topers, who roused themselves at sight of Arnold, and gave him greeting.

"Zo's, Maister Arnol', zo's! 'Ere's merry Kursmiss! Wiss zoop zommat?"

"I want John Finch. Is he here?"

"Ha wis 'ere dree minnits agan. Ha wis zmoakin' es baccy an' drinkin' es pot jist now. Jan Vinch, wheer be?"

"Wha cals?" came in stentorian tones from the kitchen, and Arnold went in there. The young Anak was eating his supper, but he got up at once with a face of welcome, and proffered a hand about the size of a small plateau. "Zo's, Maister Arnol'! Du zim 'ears like zens I zeed you. Wiss yet zom mait wi' me?"

"No, John, no; go on with your supper. I want you to do me a kindness. I must go to London to-night, and with your black mare I could just catch the train. Will you drive me, John?"

"W'y zartin zuer, Maister Arnol'. Wis jist a-thinkin', I wis, thet Black Sal es a yettin hur 'ead aff i' tha stabul."

Here Mrs. Finch, senior "Jan's mither," came in, and was addressed by her son.

"Ole humman, Maister Arnol' an' me es agwain tu Lunnon. Leastways, Maister Arnol's agwain to Lunnon, an' I'ze agwain drive unto tha railraud. Wis tul Dick tu yoke thic mare?"

"Good fellow, John—but that you always were. Thank you—thank you. We must be off in ten minutes; we shall barely do it then."

Arnold just waited to see Black Sal brought out snorting from her stable, heard Dick issue the not unnecessary warning to the onlookers to "ztan vrim hur heels," and then set off down the road again, resisting the general invitation of the bar to "wet es wissel wi' a drap zider."

"Uncle," he said to the Rev. Paul, who had hardly yet taken in the situation, but was giving ponderous directions for the packing of the bag, "you must explain my going away to Marian and the lieutenant. I hope to be back to-morrow evening. Now, here's John with the mare. Give me the bag. Good-bye—good-bye."

"There must be fifty things I want from town if I could think of them. But get me some copper-caps and a pruning-knife at all events," said the vicar. "Good-bye, my

boy. I want some new shears, too, but you'd forget them like as not. Keturah, do you want that mare to bite your head off? Whew! There they go!"

For in less than a minute, and before any one in the house was well awake to the fact of his departure, Arnold had mounted beside John, the black mare had plunged, reared, and hurled herself forward like a thunder-bolt, and the night had swallowed up the gig and its occupants.

"Humph! the youngster has go in him," muttered the old vicar, as he shut the gate and took his way back to the house. "If I'd ever been able to make my mind up and act on it in that style, I might have been a bishop by this time. Pooh! did I ever want to be a bishop? Keturah, wash your face, and bring your Catechism into my study. It's fit that I began to get you ready for Confirmation."

The hoofs of Black Sal, rough-shod for the winter roads, thundered along the lane. As they got out on to the high-road John brought her from a mad gallop to a superb trot; but the pace—fifteen miles an hour at least—was too stiff to last, so he let her go at it for a couple of hundred yards, and then settled her down to her own ten-mile speed, and knew that she was good for the journey. The moon would not be serviceable for an hour yet, but John could have driven, as he said, "wi' es eyes shet;" and as for Black Sal, she knew whose hand was on the rein.

John was bent on catching the train, the mare was bent on doing John's bidding, Arnold was brimful of his quixotic scheme. So, while Black Sal forged ahead in splendid style, swerving not a hair's-breadth from the center of the road, though it was pitch-dark four yards before her nose, the two men were silent. It was a neck-and-neck race for the train.

Arnold had scarcely dared as yet to shape his thoughts in words. His brain seethed with his great idea. It lay there just as it had come to him; he had hardly brought reason to bear upon it. Heaven had inspired him with it, he thought, and Heaven would help him to realize it.

At the end of three quarters of an hour the black mare's fiery speed had not slackened one degree, but the glimmer of the lamp showed here and there a faint white streak on her glossy coat.

"Zwettin!" said John, laconically.

Arnold looked at his watch. Seventeen minutes only, and three miles to go.

"Bit doan't you be vussled, Maister Arnol'," said John. "I'ze bin kippin of her in—look at her now! *My ivers!* look at her now!"

A mere shake of the reins did it. The mare sprung forward as if she had suddenly been released from the shafts, and the gig flew over the glassy road. Since the day when the Customs officers chased the smugglers there had been no such going as this under the canopy of the night. Two miles were covered in no time.

Presently the clang of a bell was heard in the distance—faint at first, and then louder, as the wind shifted for a moment.

"Thic es tha railraud bul!" exclaimed John.

Arnold heard it too, and began to look anxiously for the station lights.

"Com, lass, com! Diss'n let thic machine-oss lick thur!" cried John; and Black Sal put out again, and the clash of her hoofs upon the road drowned the noise of the bell.

Luckily the train did not always follow hard upon the bell in those parts, and it was but just lumbering up to the platform whon John Finch reined in the gallant black at the station door.

"Thank you, John, a thousand times!" said Arnold, as he jumped from the gig. "I don't know which to thank most, you or Black Sal. What shall I bring you from London, John?"

"Vrim Lunnon, Maister Arnol'? W'y zee now; there's nort *I'ze* waunt; bit you mit git tu ur dree ounces znuff vur veyther. Tha znuff i' these pairts es vury quare ztuff, an' doan't zim tu zute veyther's noas. Git veyther zom znuff in Lunnon, Maister Arnol'."

Assuring John that he would not forget this commission, Arnold skeltered down to the platform, bought a ticket, and just secured a seat in an empty carriage as the train was wheezing out of the station.

Slow traveling now, and bitter cold; but Arnold's blood was still at fever heat. At the end of an hour the junction was reached, where he had to change and wait for the London train.

The London train was late, and Arnold, who had no patience to sit, paced up and down the platform. By this time he was both cold and hungry, and weariness of body began to lead up to a reaction of mind.

Now for the first time Arnold began to submit his scheme to the process of criticism—to bring it under the review of consciousness; and the more closely he examined it in the light of reason the stranger the shape it took. Yes, it was undoubtedly a very singular scheme.

After forty minutes of this exercise—growing colder and wearier every time he measured the dreary length of the platform—the London train came up, and Arnold took his seat.

Fatigue, and the comparative warmth of the carriage after the bitter air of the platform, made him drowsy, and in a little while he fell asleep. Now this was a fatal proceeding; he should have kept awake at all cost. While he slept he dreamed, and the subject of his dream was his mission.

What, then, was this mission of Arnold? While he sleeps and dreams of it, let me unfold it to the reader.

It has been told how Mr. Rupert Trimble, the sole surviving partner in the old established firm of Trimble and Trimble, had just offered Arnold the post of manager in his office. This would give him a firm position and an independent salary. And these he was willing to sacrifice for Marian's sake.

Marian must go abroad. Arnold felt that he alone could enable her to do so. She must know nothing of his scheme, for she had never given him the right to act in her behalf, least of all to take such action as must result in material loss to himself. What he meant to do he must do on his own responsibility.

To the end that Marian might go abroad, Arnold must raise without delay a considerable sum of money. He could not raise it except upon the security of his own services. Mr. Trimble, his master, was therefore the only man from whom he could procure it. He was going to appeal to Trimble to accept his services by way of mortgage for what seemed to him a most tremendous debt. His plan, so far as it had yet shaped itself, was to ask his employer to give him the nominal post of manager in his office, to allow him to discharge the larger and far more responsible duties of that post at the pay of a junior clerk, on consideration of receiving from Mr. Trimble the heavy loan that he required. He could repay this loan only by sacrificing for a considerable period nearly three fourths of

the higher salary he had been promised. To borrow in such circumstances—for he would be bound in honor not to reveal the purpose for which the loan was needed—would be a loss of caste as well as of money. Moreover, would the lawyer consent to be lender on terms like these?

Arnold dreamed out his dream, and awoke with a dull feeling of discomfiture, for his vision of the private interview with his chief had ended abruptly with that gentleman's rejection of his proposal. He should have kept awake at all cost. He had gone to sleep doubting; he awoke despairing. It had seemed a Quixotic errand before; it seemed a fool's errand now.

The train stood still for a moment on a siding outside a small wayside station, the moon gleaming coldly over the fields, the earth as quiet as the sky. Arnold was half tempted to let himself out and wait at the little station for a returning train. But that would be treason to his devotion, and just then the train moved on again, and Arnold was glad of it, and resolved to dare his hazardous experiment.

He fell again to examining the pros and the cons of his scheme; the pros were few, the cons were many.

As to the pros, Mr. Trimble had always shown him marked kindness, and was an old friend of his uncle, the vicar; and had known, and once, he believed, rendered some slight service to Arnold's mother in days which were beyond Arnold's recollection. He could think of nothing else that might weigh in his favor.

As to the cons, they were innumerable. To begin with, the character of his proposal was utterly unbusiness-like, and it was to be made to a man who was, above all else, a matter-of-fact and parchment-like lawyer. Then there was the lack of any but a commercial relation between them; there was Arnold's freshness in the profession, the fact of his being just qualified to pass his examination for admission, the lack of proper security, and—but the opposing arguments crowded so thick upon his mind that he had not breath to answer them, and gave up the attempt.

Despair took an almost visible shape before him, and was his ghostly companion for the remainder of the journey.

London was reached in a snow-storm at three in the morning, and as Arnold's lodgings were four miles distant

from the terminus, he went to the hotel adjoining for a few hours' sleep, before presenting himself in the sanctum of Mr. Rupert Trimble.

CHAPTER VI.

MASTER AND CLERK.

MR. RUPERT TRIMBLE had his matutinal mood, which was a slightly acid one.

In person he was a largeish and heavy man, burdened like M. de Rohan "with a certain degree of corpulency." An habitual droop of the eyelids gave a rather somnolent expression to his countenance.

His professional day began punctually at ten o'clock, at which hour he got down from the brougham that had carried him from Belsize Park, passed through the outer chamber of his office in Bedford Row, acknowledging with a brief "Morning!" the salutation of his clerks, and proceeded to his own room.

His table, whereon his letters were always arranged in a pile, faced the door. An observant visitor would have noticed that in place of the customary gong there was a small silver hand-bell within easy reach of the solicitor's right hand, and that instead of the modern inkstand with its appendages, Mr. Trimble employed quills and the sand-box of our forefathers. A high shelf running round three sides of the room was occupied by deed-boxes, white-lettered, and variously labeled "Green *vs.* White," "Exors. of Simpson," and so on—containing the family skeletons of many families, some of them long since extinct; the surviving troubles of many generations; ghosts from the defunct Court of Chancery; and much that, had it been in any one else's keeping, Mr. Trimble might fairly have described as rubbish. Here Mr. Trimble sat, amid surroundings studiously and decorously dull, from ten o'clock in the morning until five o'clock in the evening.

On this particular morning, having glanced through the letters on his table, he rang his bell, and the junior clerk presented himself.

"Is there no answer to that telegram?"

"No, sir."

Mr. Trimble opened and read his letters, a process which occupied him about ten minutes, then rang his bell again.

"Quite sure there's no answer to that telegram?"

"No answer, sir; I've asked Mr. Jones."

"Tell Mr. Jones I want to see him."

But Mr. Jones who had an exceedingly fine ear when his employer called, was already at the door. He was Arnold's senior by about ten years; a florid and high-colored young man, by no means bad looking, with sandy hair parted in the middle, and a reddish mustache.

Mr. Jones had been in the service of Trimble & Trimble five years longer than Arnold, yet he had shown no resentment when Mr. Trimble announced his intention to give Arnold the chief position in the office.

"Lee's a good fellow, and the luck's against me in everything," was Mr. Jones's comment, beyond which he contented himself with a suggestion that Arnold should treat him to a week's luncheons when he returned from the country. But to the junior clerk who received more of Mr. Jones's confidences than Arnold, he expressed an opinion in private that "Trimble had played him rather a shabby trick."

"That telegram to Lee, was it rightly addressed?" inquired Mr. Trimble of his second clerk.

"Oh, yes, sir; I addressed it myself. But it's a very out-of-the-way place, I believe; Lee may not have had the telegram until late in the evening, and—why, here's Lee himself, sir!"

Arnold had roused himself a little before nine. He had slept four hours, barely long enough to refresh his body, and by no means long enough to strengthen his heart, after the desperate forebodings of the night before. He took his bath and felt better, his breakfast, and felt better still; then, while the braver mood was on him, he went straight to the office in Bedford Row.

As his arrival there was entirely unlooked for, he was received with a surprise little less than dramatic.

But Mr. Trimble, who disliked nothing so much as the unexpected, broke out petulantly:

"What's that you say, Jones?—Lee? Where is he? What has he come up for? Bless me, it *is* Lee."

For Arnold had proceeded at once to his principal's room, and stood holding the door in his hand.

Mr. Jones hovered behind him, curious and expectant; but Mr. Trimble signaled Arnold with a little impatient movement of his quill, and, as he entered the room, he took good care to close the door after him.

"You upset me! you quite upset me!" explained Mr. Trimble, fidgeting in his chair. "What have you come up for? I expected to hear from you, of course; but a telegram would have done—or a letter, for that matter. It's not so pressing."

"Yes, sir," began Arnold, "but—"

"Well, well, say no more about it," interrupted the solicitor, who, in fact, was very glad to see him. "I didn't want to break into your holiday, but after all I'm not sorry to see you. I've been a little out of sorts myself the last day or two, and the office is going at sixes and sevens. Let me see, what was it I telegraphed to you about?"

"Admiral Græme's bill of costs, sir."

"Ah, yes, to be sure. You know the admiral, good client, but tiresome man. He's been writing two letters a day about that bill of costs; wants to know how I can expect to be paid if I don't send it to him. One would think I'd been dunning the man. You'd better see to it at once. And there are other matters, too. Really, I'm not sorry you've come!"

"Thank you, sir; but the truth is I took advantage of your telegram to come and see you on some private business—some urgent business, sir."

"What is it? what is it? Nothing wrong at home? By the way, how is your uncle, Lee?"

"He is well, sir, thank you, and was speaking of you a night or two ago. He is meaning to write and thank you for your kindness to me. It is a matter of my own that I have come to you about."

"Want to get married, Lee?"

"No, sir; I don't see my way to that at present. I am going to be so bold, Mr. Trimble, as to ask your assistance. I am in sore trouble—I—"

Arnold broke off. His heart failed him. The proposal he was going to make rose up suddenly in his mind and confronted him with an altogether monstrous shape.

Mr. Trimble said nothing, but his face took a serious cast. Still Arnold hesitated.

"Well," said the solicitor at length, but without looking up, "what is your trouble?"

"To be brief, sir," answered Arnold, with a visible effort, "it is this: Since I left you on Monday, very gratefully accepting your offer of the management of your business, a matter has arisen which obliges me to raise without delay a very considerable sum of money—not less than two hundred and fifty pounds. It is to raise this that I have come to beg your help."

A cloud began to darken the heavy features of Mr. Trimble, and his lawyer's mind proceeded at once to take a more or less criminal view of the situation.

"Two hundred and fifty pounds! Why, what's this for? What have you been doing, Lee?"

"It is no fault of my own, sir, that obliges me to raise the money," replied Arnold, in a grave but quiet tone.

"Of course not; of course not." This in a not very friendly tone; but Mr. Trimble recollected that he had not proposed to appoint this young man his manager until he had proved his virtue, and went on, as if anxious to make some amend. "At any rate I have never known you for a foolish fellow since you've been with me, or an untrustworthy either. But this makes it the more extraordinary that you should ask me for two hundred and fifty pounds. Why, it's two years' salary at the rate I've been paying you. What is it for, I say?"

"Sir, I must throw myself on your generosity, and beg you to assist me to the money without asking why I need it. It is a part of my difficulty that I am not able to offer you an explanation."

"This is absurd!" said Mr. Trimble, testily.

"It is unbusiness-like, at any rate, I am afraid," answered Arnold, meekly.

"It is worse than that. I say to you it is much worse than that. I am not a money-lender, Lee. If I were I should say simply, 'What is your security?' But you are my clerk; your uncle is my friend. If you come to borrow money of me I have a right to ask the use to which you would put it. You say, 'I can not tell you.' What answer should a man in my position make to that?"

"I plead my past, sir. Have you ever found me anything but truthful? I ask you to believe me when I say that I am in trouble through no fault of my own."

"I have found you both steady and honest, Lee. But the unforeseen will happen, you know, and a steady and an honest fellow may get himself into a scrape. Come, now, confess that you are in some scrape. Tell me what it is, and you may find me no usurer."

"It is no scrape, sir, but more than that I can not say. My trouble is another's more than mine, and it is for that other's sake that my lips are sealed."

"This is a sort of language I am not interested in," said Mr. Trimble, dryly, "and it does not seem to me to strengthen your case. I have one more question to put to you. Does your uncle know of this business?"

"I have said nothing to any one, sir."

"From which I may conclude that you have good reasons for keeping it to yourself. Well, Lee, I am sorry for this, I am very sorry, but let's waste no words over that. You ask me for a large loan, and refuse to say why you want it. Considering the relation between us, that would be a sufficient ground for my declining to advance the money. But I don't wish to see a good clerk spoiled, or, perhaps, ruined, for lack of a helping hand from his employer. I am willing to consider the matter further, but as you choose to take your own standing with me I'll take my own standing with you. How do you propose to—"

At this juncture the door opened and the genial countenance of Mr. Jones appeared behind it.

"Did you ring, sir?"

"Ring? no! You know the sound of a bell, Mr. Jones, don't you?"

Mr. Jones apologized and retired. An eager and a curious man, Mr. Jones.

"I was going to say," continued Mr. Trimble, "how do you propose to repay me, supposing I should advance you this sum, or a part of it?"

"I have thought of that, sir," replied Arnold. "I can raise this sum, if at all, only on the security of my own services. It is for that reason I have ventured to ask you to be the lender. I propose to mortgage my services to you for a term of two years. You have shown your confidence in me by offering to appoint me your manager, with a salary of two hundred pounds for the first year. Let me be your manager, and if you will lend me the sum I ask I will return you one hundred and fifty pounds of my salary at the

end of the year. The remaining one hundred pounds I will pay in the following year."

"What do you mean," asked his master, slowly, "when you say that you will return me one hundred and fifty pounds of your salary at the end of the first year? Do you mean that you will give me a lump sum of one hundred and fifty pounds in December next?"

"No, sir," answered Arnold. "I will make your risk as small as possible. The payment of the loan shall commence at once. I mean that you shall pay me fifty pounds instead of two hundred pounds during the coming year."

"You propose, in other words, to manage my business on the salary of a junior clerk?"

"That is what I propose, sir?"

"I decide to appoint you my manager, Lee," said Mr. Trimble, with a pause between every other word, "under the impression that you were not only a trustworthy fellow, but that you had intelligence beyond your years. It seems to me, however, that you are little better than a fool. A madder proposal than this I never listened too."

"It may very well seem mad to you, sir. I do not object to the term, but it seems to me that at the worst I am proposing only to sacrifice a certain amount of salary for a couple of years. Two years of hard living should be no great trial to a man who has had to count his shillings all his life; and with the object I have in view the sacrifice looks small enough to me."

"The sacrifice may be a great one or a small one to you; that is your affair, and not mine. But I have an interest of my own in this matter. I have proposed to increase your salary in making you a manager, and shall expect you to let that be seen. You can't live like my manager, or look like my manager, on fifty ponnds a year."

"I shall not be quite reduced to that amount, sir—not during the coming year, at any rate."

"You have no fortune; that I know; and your hands will be fuller of work here than they have been. You'll have very little time for supplementing your fifty pounds elsewhere. No, Lee, you're proposing a foolish thing, which it would not be right in me to accept. I think of my own business, but I can give a thought to your interests too; and I have seen enough of life to know that what you are asking of me is neither more nor less than

that I should help you ruin your own prospects. I can't do that, and I won't. Your proposal is impracticable and worse than impracticable. I will have nothing to say to it. If you must have your two hundred and fifty pounds, go to a money-lender."

The door was opened again with a sudden impulsive movement, and once more the smiling features of Mr. Jones illumined the sanctum.

"I think you rang that time, sir?" said the indefatigable clerk.

"No, I did not ring that time. Can't you see that I am engaged, Mr. Jones? Don't let me be disturbed again." Mr. Jones murmured his apology and withdrew.

Arnold stood by Mr. Trimble's table, silent and downcast.

"Very well, sir," he said respectfully. "If you can not assist me I will not trouble you further."

Was it a look in the eyes, those dark trustful eyes, with their momentary pleading? Was it a touch in the voice, or a mere unconscious gesture of the hand? What shadowy something was it that awoke in the secret chambers of the lawyer's heart a buried memory of Arnold's mother?

"Make a clean breast of it, Lee," he said, in not unkindly accents. "Tell me this trouble of yours. Never fear to trust an old man. I have seen forty years more of life than you have."

"I do not fear to trust you, sir, but—I can not tell more than I have told."

Yes, it was there. The solicitor knew not what it was that moved him, save that by some spiritual process there had been fetched up in his mind the gentle image of this lad's mother, whom he had known when Arnold was a child; who had once, on some errand of mercy, been a suppliant to him in this very room, and had pleaded not in vain.

The man was capable, under strong emotional influence, of a warmth and generosity of action such as no average motive could provoke him to. A wave of feeling swept him now, and carried him beyond himself. It was an impulse of sheer sentiment; but is not sentiment the source and motor of most things that are done amongst us?

An instant's hesitation; then he struck the desk with his

hand, and with a half-angry movement thrust himself back in his chair.

"Fetch me my check-book," he said, pointing to the safe.

CHAPTER VII.

THE SCHEME ADVANCES.

Mr. Trimble hurriedly wrote and signed a check for two hundred and fifty pounds, and handed it to Arnold, who received the slip of paper with the strangest feelings.

But he was not allowed to speak, for, as he was about to open his lips, Mr. Trimble said:

"There, that will do. If you are going to thank me, you may as well return the check; for I am doing a foolish thing, and if you give me a minute for reflection I will most likely undo it. But it's no gift, you know. I lend you the money on the terms you propose. Now get back home and finish your holiday. Tell Jones about that bill of costs, and then away with you."

"But, sir," began Arnold, in a voice not quite steady, and with worlds of gratitude in those fine eyes of his, "I can not go till you have let me say—"

Mr. Trimble laid a vehement hand on his bell, and the ever-ready Jones was present in an instant.

Arnold saw that thanks were not to be permitted, so he simply bowed and withdrew. Ten minutes later he was out of the office, his cheeks red with victory, and his check in his pocket.

He was in no mood for questioning the future. The present was enough. He had triumphed so far; never mind the rest. Even at such a moment as this a more phlegmatic man might have stayed to think that the triumph had been dearly bought; not so Arnold.

He was wildly elated that his scheme had so well succeeded; how should he pause to ask himself on what footing he would return to the office he had just quitted?

The first-fruits of his enterprise he was sure of—had got them in his pocket—let the after-fruit be what it might.

Next, as to getting home. To-day or to-morrow? He had left sad hearts at home; they must be lightened as speedily as possible, and Arnold knew that he was the only

one who could lighten them. It was a question merely of the railway.

He looked at his watch; it wanted five minutes to eleven. Excellent! for he remembered a train leaving town a few minutes after twelve, by which he might reach the station at the other end about seven in the evening. It would be necessary to walk home from there, but he could manage that with two hundred and fifty pounds in Bank of England notes for company. The midday train then, by all means, and there was just time to execute the vicar's commissions besides.

That journey home was a delightful one.

Marian was to go abroad; it was Arnold who would send her. She was to get back the health she had been robbed of, Arnold being the physician-in-chief. Then there was the sweetness of doing it all in secret.

Over this Arnold thought long, and resolved that the lieutenant was the only other person who could, in justice to Marian, be admitted to the plot. To admit him was necessary, for to him the money must be given; but no one else, not even his uncle, could fairly be told what Arnold had done.

The little wayside station was reached at last, a good half hour behind time. There was no conveyance there. Job met the earlier train, for by the seven o'clock there was not a passenger once in six months who was worth the taking up.

But Arnold knew the path through the fields, a broad, well-beaten track, at least four miles shorter than the road.

Long months after, walking alone by night through the streets of London, he recalled the pleasure of that lonely tramp through the wild, wintery fields and by the edges of wind-swept moors, with the deep, dark sky above, and the tender fretwork of the stars. There was such accord above and below, with all sounds hushed, except for the occasional beating of the wind amongst the trees, and the faint far-off chorus of the waves.

The riotous gladness of heart with which he had started on his journey had given way to a feeling of sober happiness; but there was a little leaping of the pulse now and then, when he put his hand up to the pocket-book that held the notes into which he had converted the check, and thought of the light that would break over the lieutenant's

features when he showed them, and told him they were for Marian's use.

And new feelings began to steal into his heart about Marian. Along with love was joined now the sense that he had become her protector—better than that, he hoped to be her deliverer.

It was a little after nine o'clock when Arnold reached the Vicarage. There were curious sounds proceeding from the house, which made him pause for a moment in some alarm, but he was reassured on going nearer to find that they proceeded from the vicar and his harmonium. The old man was practicing a Christmas anthem. Seated at the harmonium, his coat-tails sweeping the ground, his big body swaying slowly to and fro, he thundered forth in magnificent and most inappropriate style a sweetly simple tune of Christmas.

"Hullo, my Ulysses!" he exclaimed, when Arnold showed himself in the room. "Are ye back already? Ah, trains and the telegraph were made for fellows like you! Is Trimble's business settled, eh?"

"Yes, and yours too, uncle—Trimble's in half an hour, and yours in five minutes."

"Good! If I'd had those copper caps, though, there'd ha' been a hare in the pot for you now. Have ye supped?"

"No; I'm famished!"

"Hum! Keturah's abed, and Ann off to the village with broth for one of them. But take up the lamp, and we'll look into the larder; I'm hungry myself. I don't know, but I'd rather go to London and back in four-and-twenty hours than spend two holloaing of anthems. Steady with the lamp!"

"Is Marian any better, uncle?"

"She's as gay as the morning, but droops at times. Poor Lem is fathoms deep in the Slough of Despond. You see, it's a question of two hundred pounds at the very least, and how it's to be raised I don't know. Hang the boy! he looks quite cheerful!"

"The money must certainly be raised, uncle. I'm afraid two hundred pounds wouldn't be enough. But let us look for some supper."

Arnold slept that night like Adam in Paradise. The next morning, while dressing, a thought occurred to him in the form of a question. Would the lieutenant, any

more than Marian, be willing to accept his help if he knew the terms on which the check had been procured?

It seemed doubtful. Arnold, therefore, must not tell too much of the interview with Mr. Trimble. The major part of the secret must be his own after all. And, casting it over in his mind, he could not but see that he was yet far from the point at which he might venture to congratulate himself on the satisfactory issue of his scheme. The money he had got. So far so good. But how many practical difficulties remained to be dealt with!

Success, in fact, as Master Arnold had to assure himself, is a relative term.

He had brought himself into a delicate, if not indeed a quite abnormal position.

His chance of complete success lay in the utter helplessness of the lieutenant. The verdict of the doctors was decisive; Arnold knew that he was the only person who could secure its being put into effect. Here accordingly lay his opportunity and his hope.

"Well, boy," said the vicar, when Arnold came down to breakfast, "you look something heartier than you did the day before yesterday. You might put a little comfort into Lem, with a face like that. Lem will be over here by and by, and, between you and me, I don't feel equal to him this morning. We had such a talking bout yesterday over this business of poor Marian's that I'm as dry as our well! Take him in hand, you, and say something comfortable. I gave it to him all on the other side."

"Well, uncle, if you want to be out of the way for awhile, you had better make yourself scarce at once, for I see the lieutenant coming up the road."

"Very well, I'll scuttle. If you succeed in putting some cheer into him, bring him out to me. I fear me I am a very selfish man, but I have to preach glad tidings the day after to-morrow, and poor Lem's face is a text for Good Friday."

Now the real truth of the vicar's unwillingness to meet his friend was that neither of them had mental resources sufficient for a crisis like the present, and they had completely exhausted one another on the previous day. Parson Paul would have been a superb figure at the head of an army of crusaders, and quite in his element in leading a forlorn hope; but his mental armory was not such as a

man might boast of. Rather was he of the caliber of that doughty mediæval priest who, because of his vows, never fought with any weapon sharper than a mace.

Consequently, in discussing with the lieutenant the possibility of carrying out the doctor's commands, he had found himself at the end of his tether when he had declared, briefly and peremptorily, that as Marian had been ordered abroad, abroad she must immediately go.

"Yes, Paul, yes," had pleaded the lieutenant in his mild, irresolute way; "but it is not sufficient to say that. You see, Paul, it is as though you told a man on a treeless island in mid-ocean that his only hope of safety lay in making for himself a boat."

"The advice would be none the less good were I able to assist him to his boat or not," responded the vicar. "I tell you that, somehow or other, the means must be found, Lem."

"It is true; it is very true, Paul; else the poor girl will die. But how to find these means, Paul?"

And then the vicar stormed, and said that Lem was unreasonable, inasmuch as, though he had plainly shown him what course to take, there was no getting him to take it.

This had not tended to lighten the lieutenant's distress, and he looked the picture of desolation as he approched the Vicarage at breakfast-time that morning. He appeared, in truth, so completely vanquished that Arnold felt there could be no very serious difficulty in prevailing on him to accept the help he had to offer. He saw his way more clearly and shaped his plan accordingly.

He went to meet the lieutenant at the door.

"So soon back, Arnold? When I was your age it would have occupied a week at least to go and come from London. But I am glad you are returned; I have hardly spoken with you since this sore trouble has come upon me."

"Come in, and let us talk, lieutenant. My uncle has just gone out. How do you find Marian to-day?"

"I thank God, she seems better. But she is never the same for many hours together: very bright now, and then depressed and drooping; and the trouble with the chest continues."

"That trouble with the chest is what I do not like," said Arnold.

"You are right, Arnold; it is the gravest symptom.

That is what the doctor at Cambridge said; and our good doctor here says the same. She has a troublesome cough at times."

"Then her being brighter in spirits at one time than at another is, I fear, not to be trusted," said Arnold, trying to lead steadily up to his point. "The trouble with the chest must be the main thing. Can that be cured while she stays here?"

"They say that it is not possible," answered the lieutenant, shaking his head sadly.

"In that case, lieutenant, have you thought of any means by which she might be sent abroad?"

"I can see no way by which it may be done. Oh, Arnold, is it not terrible to know that there is but one course open, and that course impossible? All my care for her to end in this! What can I do, Arnold? You know how it stands with me: I am quite crippled; I have not twenty pounds of ready money."

"Is there no friend who could help?"

"No; there is none: I am quite solitary. One does not make new friends here, and you know how seldom I have been from home these many years. Marian and her little sister have been my care; I have lived for them. Those who knew me once must almost have forgotten my name."

"Suppose that I could be of some help, lieutenant?"

"Ay, indeed, Arnold, ay: I know that no one would help us more quickly or more gladly, if it might be."

The lieutenant said this kindly, but as one might give assent to some general proposition of rather remote import.

"Yes, but, lieutenant, suppose that I am indeed able?" said Arnold again.

"Eh? What do you mean, Arnold?" answered the lieutenant, as if Arnold's words had suddenly acquired some import for him.

"I mean this, lieutenant, that if you are willing, for Marian's sake, to accept help from me, I am able to render it."

"Why, my dear Arnold," replied the lieutenant, "if you are indeed able to render us some little help, you know that it will be accepted willingly and gladly. But I think you do not know how great my needs are. Paul and myself talked this out yesterday, and decided that if Marian were to go away—the Cambridge doctor advised Madeira—

two hundred pounds, at least, would be wanted. Two hundred pounds, Arnold! A fortune to us."

"Yes, a large sum, no doubt, lieutenant; but I can give you that, and fifty pounds more—*immediately.*"

"You, Arnold? You! two hundred and fifty pounds!" and the lieutenant fixed his mild gray eyes on him, wide open and filled with astonishment.

For answer Arnold took a sheaf of notes from his pocket-book, unfolded them, and spread them before the lieutenant.

The lieutenant stared at the paper in blank amazement, put out his hand and touched it, then pushed it hurriedly from him, and said, trembling:

"No; I can not; I will not. It is not right. Take back your money, Arnold."

"For Marian's sake," said Arnold, and pushed the notes toward him again.

"I say I will not touch them," replied the old man, but his tone faltered, and he looked wistfully, almost hungrily, at the notes.

"For Marian's sake," Arnold said again. "You can not refuse it for her sake, lieutenant."

"God help me! you are tempting me. But I will not take it, for it is not right. How is it possible that you can offer me this great sum?"

"You do not think that I have come by it dishonestly, lieutenant?"

"No, no; I know you too well. That was not my thought. But you must have made some great sacrifice. You must—"

"What sacrifice would be too great to me if I might save Marian's life?" replied Arnold.

"Ay, ay; that is very noble of you, Arnold. But you must have pledged yourself for this; and if so you may come to repent it—very grievously, perhaps. It is your good heart has prompted you to this; but how can I let you do rashly, on an unconsidered impulse, what may bring harm on you hereafter? You are young, and can not afford to jeopardize your future. I pray you take back your money."

"Listen to me, lieutenant. I am richer than I was, much richer. You do not know what my position is now. It is six months since you and I talked over my affairs;

since then Mr. Trimble has made me his manager. How do you know what money I may have saved? Believe me, when I say that I am well able to put this money in your hands for Marian's use. Now, let us see how the matter stands with you. You have told me how powerless you are: and Marian's life is at stake. Surely these two grounds are more than sufficient. I say you *must* take this money."

"But your future, Arnold, your future. You must not put that in jeopardy."

"No, dear lieutenant, and I do not intend to. Come, let us make an end. It will not be kind either to Marian or to me if you hesitate longer."

Now the poor lieutenant was honestly and most sorely perplexed. When he thought of Marian he longed to close his fingers on the notes. When he thought of Arnold he was tormented by fears that the young man was straitening if not crippling himself to do this great act of generosity. So for his conscience' sake he made one more effort to dissuade him.

"I can not receive this as a gift, Arnold," he said, "and if I take it as a loan, how can I hope to repay you?"

But Arnold was ready with his anwer.

"This is quite another argument, lieutenant," said he. "And this we can discuss another day."

"Well, then," replied the lieutenant, who really saw no course but to yield, "if Marian will consent, I will consent too."

"What are you saying, sir?" cried Arnold in alarm. "Marian! But you must not tell *her* of this. No, no; this must be our secret—yours and mine, lieutenant. Of course Marian would not consent; how could she? With you it is quite different; but think what a position hers would be if she knew of this. I have not breathed a syllable to any one but you. My uncle, even, does not know a word of it; nor must he. In justice to Marian it must be kept from her, and from every one else."

The lieutenant saw and acknowledged the force of this.

"Then no more remains but for you to take and put up these notes. Come, I have won you over, have I not? You will not let scruples of any sort override the question whether Marian's life is to be saved?"

Here at length the old lieutenant fairly broke down and cried.

"You have overcome me, Arnold," he said. "I can not resist any longer. I pray God I may be doing you no wrong. I will take your money for my dear child's sake."

Then the lieutenant pledged his faith to Arnold to keep the matter a secret between them, and took the roll of notes from Arnold's hands and laid it away in his inner pocket.

"And now," said Arnold, "I shall not stay here much longer, for it is better I should be out of the way. In a day or two I shall return to town, but we shall be able to talk much before I go. Meanwhile, you must see Marian and tell her that you have decided she must go away as the doctors have ordered."

"It will be very difficult," said the lieutenant.

"We will all help you," said Arnold.

"But your uncle, what will he say? He knows how impossible it is for me to find the money."

It was a trait of the lieutenant's character, which amounted almost to weakness, that he always saw the difficulties of a scheme more readily than its possibilities.

"My uncle? Oh, we must mystify him," replied Arnold, to whom, now that he had conquered the lieutenant, and compelled him to secrecy, all other obstacles seemed trivial.

Then, seeing the lieutenant full of a tremulous anxiety to get home and talk to Marian, he proposed to him to return to the Vineyard at once; and the lieutenant, without waiting to see the vicar, set off.

"Say that I shall come over immediately," called out Arnold, as the lieutenant went through the gate, and added, "but I shall wait, you know, until I think that you have brought her round."

Then, with a lighter heart than he had known for full three days, he went in search of his uncle, to acquaint him that he had succeeded in raising the lieutenant's spirits.

The lieutenant went home much faster than he had come, but when he had turned the bend of the road, and knew that he was unobserved, he stood still a moment and lifted his hat, and some silent word or two of prayerful gratitude broke from his heart and mounted skyward.

Then he went on, and braced himself for an interview with Marian.

Now, Marian, knowing how heavily her uncle had taxed

himself for some years past to provide for her own and her sister's education, had not ceased to insist that the doctors must be disregarded, and that she could not and would not go abroad.

They had talked of this and of nothing else during the past two days. In the morning, while she was stronger and her mind unexhausted, the lieutenant was quite unable to prevail with her, for she had much energy of will; and besides that, she had been accustomed to her own way with him.

But later in the day, when her powers began to flag, she would let the lieutenant talk on, and indeed he knew that her physical weakness, which always vanquished her in the end, gave him his only chance.

"Has Arnold come back, uncle?" she asked, when the lieutenant presented himself.

"Yes, dear, yes. He returned last night; came by the midday train, and walked all the way from Threndon. He told me to say that he would be over to see you immediately. We have had some little talk together."

"Well, I'm glad of that, Uncle Lemuel, because it seems to have done you good. Did my name occur in the conversation? I seem to be the only topic just now. Has Arnold been telling you that the doctors are very foolish gentlemen?"

"No, indeed, dear; he is of my opinion, namely, that the doctors are quite right."

"And is no one of my opinion, uncle?"

"No one, dear."

"Well, that is very unkind, but it does not shake me in the least. I am twice as well as when we left Cambridge, and if I go on improving at this rate I shall be better than ever in a fortnight."

"In a fortnight, my dear child, I hope that you will be many hundred miles from here."

The lieutenant said this with so firm an air that Marian gave him a look in which amusement was mingled with genuine surprise. Hitherto it had been, "My dear, I fear that you must go. Somehow or other we shall find the means." But "many hundred miles in a fortnight!"—this was clinching matters with a will.

"What a dreadfully cruel wish, Uncle Lemuel?" she said.

"Marian, my dear," he replied, "we must be in earnest —we must be very much in earnest. I do not like you to jest on a matter so serious."

"No, dear uncle; the prospect of being many hundred miles from Three Dykes in a fortnight sounds a very poor jest to me. Just as if I had not shown you over and over again, these last two days, Uncle Lemuel, that this is entirely out of the question."

"Far from that, Marian; it is absolutely necessary. Since I have talked with Arnold this morning, I am more strongly persuaded of it than ever."

"I wish Arnold had stayed in town, then," she exclaimed.

"I think that every day you remain here is a danger to you, dear," went on the lieutenant. "Your cough is worse than when we left Cambridge."

"Phœbe's cough is twenty times as bad as mine, uncle. Why should not Phœbe seek change of air hundreds of miles from Three Dykes?"

"Phœbe has a cough, and gets rid of it in a week, dear."

"If you will give me a fortnight, uncle, I will get rid of mine."

"No, no, dear niece, it can not be. You must let the matter be taken out of your hands. It is I who must decide for you. You must be removed as quickly as possible."

"You are ruining yourself for me, Uncle Lemuel," she insisted, gently.

"Nonsense, my dear, nonsense. Who has put such a foolish idea into your head? I have thought it all over this morning more closely than before, and I can see my way quite clearly."

"All this is very sudden, uncle. It has happened since Arnold returned from London. I wonder whether Arnold has anything to do with it?"

"A great deal, dear. He has represented matters to me in a new light. You know I had hardly spoken with him until this morning."

"I begin to think that Arnold is a very wonderful person," said Marian.

"He has an excellent head; yes, and an excellent heart," answered her uncle, with his hand on the pocket that contained the notes.

"And Arnold has said that I am to go? *Where* is it I am to go, Uncle Lemuel?"

"The Cambridge doctor spoke of Madeira."

"A very good place, I am sure, Uncle Lemuel."

"I am glad to hear you say so, Marian; and to think that you have brought yourself to agree with us."

"But I have not, my dear uncle. I remain quite unshaken. You shall not send me to Madeira, for I will not go."

The lieutenant rose with a pained look on his face, and made as if he would leave the room. Marian laid her hand on his, and restrained him.

"Uncle Lemuel, please do not be angry with me," she said. "It is of you that I think, and not of myself. I can not let you do this for me, because I know that you are not able. I know what sacrifices you have made and would make for me. But this one is not necessary—it is not, dear uncle, indeed. These doctors do not know. Let us wait for a little while, and we will talk of it again if I do not mend. Arnold has frightened you; you are both too anxious."

"Too anxious we can not be, my darling niece, for it may be that we know more than you do. But we will say no more to-day. You are tired, and must rest awhile, for Arnold will be here presently."

But Arnold tarried. He felt a certain constraint about seeing her just now, so he waited, and did not go until the afternoon.

He learned then that Marian had just retired to her own room. The doctor had been with her, and had found her in a condition of exhaustion, and had said that she must be quiet for the remainder of the day.

She left a message for Arnold, asking him if he remembered that the next day was Christmas-eve, and expressing a hope that his uncle and he would come over in the evening that they might not miss their usual gathering. She would reserve herself for the evening, she said, and trusted to be quite able to receive her guests. It has been a custom of the two families to meet on Christmas-eve, sometimes at the Vicarage, sometimes at the Vineyard.

Arnold saw the lieutenant, and learned what had taken place between him and Marian.

"Marian is a very good girl," said the lieutenant, "and

I have had great difficulty in persuading her. Indeed, Arnold, I can not say that I have succeeded yet. She wants to be given a chance to recover at home, though I tried to make her know that she could never be well here. Some things that she said are heavy on my conscience. It troubled me not a little that she insisted on speaking of *my* sacrifice and the like—I, that am doing it with your money, Arnold."

"That is not at all the way to look at it, lieutenant. That part of the matter is settled between you and me, and at an end. The main thing now is to win Marian over as quickly as may be. I'll tell you what: write to the doctor at Cambridge, and get his support. Let him repeat by letter what he said to you at the college; and Doctor Grey must speak more strongly to Marian herself. Sit down at once, lieutenant; you have half an hour before post-time. Ask him to reply at once, and you will get his letter on Christmas-day."

So the lieutenant, in the earnestness and innocence of his heart, sat down and wrote an urgent letter to Dr. Wilson, who had shown a more than common interest in the case of this fair patient.

"Come over to the Vicarage in the evening," said Arnold to the lieutenant as he was leaving. "Uncle Paul must back us up too, though, as I said, we shall have to mystify him a little."

Thus these two plotters worked at their plot, and the meshes were drawn more closely around the victim.

CHAPTER VIII.

MARIAN'S ANSWER.

ON the next day Marian was not well enough to receive her friends.

"Suppose we wait until the day after to-morrow, dear?" said the lieutenant, who conjectured that he would then be in receipt of Dr. Wilson's reply.

The lieutenant was beginning to feel a mild complaisance—almost even a child-like pride—in his conspirator's part. The little gathering was postponed to the day after Christmas-day.

These two days the lieutenant and Arnold had their heads together a good deal, and Parson Paul, who had neither gift nor relish for stratagem or plot, but was for carrying all matters by assault and battery, began to sniff and look contemptuous. But he was curious notwithstanding.

"What is it you're twisting up between ye, you two there?" he asked; and went on: "Lem has swelled a good two inches since you came back from town, Master Arnold, and struts like a Pharisee! What's it all about?"

"You are humorous, Paul, you are humorous," answered the lieutenant in his soft acquiescent way. "The increase in my size is, I trust, a mere pleasant fancy of yours; and as for strutting—well, well!—if I have carried myself a little more bravely these last two days, it is, I suppose, because Arnold here has shown himself a skilled counselor in helping me with a plan whereby Marian may go abroad."

"Arnold is a fine fellow. And my counsel—eh? Mine was the foolish counsel of Ahithophel?"

"No, no, Paul. You have a shrewd and mellow wisdom of your own—" began his friend, but the vicar cut him short with one of his stentorian laughs.

"Aaron's beard! What a man is this Lemuel with his sarcasms. But what's your plan, Lem?"

"Well, well, now, 'tis not shaped yet, you know, Paul. But Arnold here has made it so clear that Marian must go, and that without delay, that I have resolved on sending her so soon as the matter can be well and properly arranged. You see, Paul, as Arnold says, it is a question of life or death, and no middle way at all; so that, at any and every cost, she must go."

"Why, all this is what I have said myself—no more and no less," observed the vicar.

"Yes, Paul, yes, you did very truly and stoutly say it, but I did not see then my course quite so clearly as—God be thanked—I see it now. But, Paul, I want you to say to Mirian all that you said to me; at least without telling her in so many words what her real danger is; I want you to speak strongly, and say that if the means can be provided—as they must be—it will not be right in her to put difficulties in the way."

"But the means, Lem! Where *are* they?"

"Well, Paul," replied the lieutenant, a shade more de-

cisively than was his wont, "I have decided to make myself responsible. Even if some small sacrifice were necessary, is this a situation in which I should hesitate at that? No, no! but you need not say anything to Marian about sacrifice. Yes, yes, it can be managed. Arnold has made it much clearer."

"Arnold, as I have already said, is a fine fellow," answered the vicar. "Well, I shall talk to Marian, Lem. Come, come, we'll do it yet—as—hem! as I always said we would."

"Thank you, Paul, thank you; you are full of comfort. Yes, by God's will, it shall be done."

The vicar might have had his suspicions, but he said nothing. That Arnold could have unfolded the secret of this sudden and surprising fertility of resource on the part of the lieutenant, his uncle well believed; but he was, of course, far from imagining the real nature or extent of Arnold's implication in the matter. He was mystified, in short; which, as we have seen, it was the desire and intention of the plotters that he should be.

The day after Christmas-day came a letter from Dr. Wilson, which was all that the lieutenant had wished. Dr. Wilson wrote at considerable length, and in a strain of quite emphatic kindliness. He repeated, with added stress, what he had told the lieutenant at Cambridge, as to the extreme and urgent gravity of Marian's case. The phthisical symptoms, he said, were not possible to be mistaken, and delay in procuring the necessary change of climate for the patient might be followed by the worst consequences. He had recommended Maderia, and on further thought was persuaded that no better place could be chosen. He gathered from Lieutenant Dean's letter that there was some slight difficulty in arranging the journey and other matters, and took the liberty therefore of offering a suggestion. He had spoken on the subject with Mrs. Wilson, who had reminded him that a friend of theirs, an elderly widow lady, residing in London, who generally spent the early part of the year abroad, was intending to sail for Maderia in the second week of January. Mrs. Wilson felt sure that their friend, Mrs. Warren, would, if Lieutenant and Miss Dean desired it, very gladly accept Miss Dean's company

to Maderia. Would Lieutenant and Miss Dean like Mrs. Wilson to communicate with Mrs. Warren?

The lieutenant showed the letter to Arnold, who said that nothing could be better. The substance of it he told to Marian, but that independent young lady continued to insist that there was no occasion for her uncle to beggar himself by sending her to Madeira, or anywhere else. Nevertheless the lieutenant saw, with quiet content, that her resolution began to be shaken. It could not well be otherwise. She lacked the sustained strength necessary to oppose the battery of argument and appeal with which the lieutenant, the vicar, and Arnold in turn assailed her.

This was the situation on the afternoon of the day after Christmas-day.

At five in the evening the vicar and Arnold set out for the Vineyard. Ann Hanoch and Keturah followed at a proper distance; for when the two families came together for a set festival, Marian entertained the gentlemen in the parlor, and Phœbe or Ann, as the case might be, made cheer for the domestics in the kitchen. Keturah carried a small parcel in one hand and a large parcel in the other. The small parcel contained Ann Hanoch's cap, the large one the vicar's music.

"Don't get up, my dear," said the vicar to Marian, when Phœbe had ushered the visitors with becoming ceremony into the parlor. "What does it matter where the mistletoe hangs? By your leave, I'll kiss you where you are."

"I was not thinking of the mistletoe, Mr. Brunskill," she said.

"No, my dear, but I was."

Arnold had said good-bye to his mistletoe privileges many a long day since; which was the worse for Arnold.

"Uncle Lemuel, will you ring for tea?" said Marian. "Mr. Brunskill, you have brought your music, I hope?"

"Not I, indeed. No, I've given over singing. As for the anthems, John Finch shall try his hand at the next."

"Phœbe," said Arnold, "tell Keturah to give you my uncle's music." And the roll was brought and deposited on the piano; and the laugh went against the vicar, whose musical vanities were a standing joke between the two families.

After tea, the two schemers set Parson Paul to ply Mari-

an with fresh arguments. Fresh arguments the vicar had none, but he endeavored to obey instructions.

"I always said, my dear, that you would prove a good and sensible girl," began the vicar, when Arnold and the lieutenant had withdrawn to another room to pretend to play draughts.

"I don't feel at all sure that your words have been verified, Mr. Brunskill," she laughed.

"To the letter," answered the vicar. "Here's the matter now well settled. Place selected, chaperon found, and you consenting with smiles. What could be fitter? In a few months we shall have you back sound and well."

"Not so fast, please, Mr. Brunskill. I have given no consent yet, and a smiling one I shall never give. Now, Mr. Brunskill, really and truly—do you not think it would be exceedingly wicked of me to go away, and put Uncle Lemuel to such great expense?"

"Eh? Well, do you know, I shouldn't wonder if Lem were a richer man than we make him out to be. He may have a little mine somewhere."

"How can you say that, Mr. Brunskill? He is as poor as poor can be, and I have been helping to make him poorer. I think it would be mean of me to go to Madeira."

The vicar beat his brain for those new and cogent arguments he was to have employed; but they were not there. He had done his all when he had gone over again the little bit of ground he had already traversed a dozen times.

"Well, my dear, let me hear what you have to say for your own case," he began, and thereby laid for himself a trap into which Marian would assuredly have drawn him, but for an interruption from one of the conspirators-in-chief.

Catching the drift of the vicar's last sentence, Arnold, with a sign to the lieutenant, jumped up and returned quickly to the room where Marian and the parson were.

"Were you asking for your music-case, Uncle Paul? It is on the piano. Marian, please ask him to sing; the lieutenant is bringing the draught-board in here."

The vicar was not sorry to be released; and so far as the scheme was concerned it was well that he had been,

for in another quarter of an hour Marian would have won him over to her side.

Marian made a comical *moue* at Arnold; she perceived that she was destined to lose the day.

"Give me the music, Arnold," she said, "and let me choose something for Mr. Brunskill. See, Mr. Brunskill, here is 'The Woodpecker,' your especial favorite, and mine too. Sing us 'The Woodpecker Tapping.'"

A voice the vicar had, but his unsparing use of it in the open air—as in cheering the hounds when he encountered the hunt, and hallooing about the garden—had somewhat spoiled it for the piano. A rousing ballad he could sing, but his friends humored his cherished fancy that his *forte* in music was the sentimental.

He opened the piano with a show of great unwillingness, and the lieutenant fetched his chair from the opposite corner beside him.

Arnold took the seat his uncle had vacated by Marian's sofa.

"This was a ruse of yours, sir," she said softly; "your uncle never asked for his music-case, and you know it. Ten minutes more and I should have convinced him; then we two would have been a match for Uncle Lemuel and you."

"Was it not cleverly done?" asked Arnold, with twinkling eyes.

"In your point of view, I suppose it was," said Marian; "but very unfair in mine. You have fenced me in on every side, but I mean to be twice as obstinate now."

Arnold became serious, and dropping his voice, he said: "You know to what purpose all this is done."

"To make poor Uncle Lemuel poorer."

"No, to make you rich—rich in the health you had six months ago."

"Well, if that is your object, you are going to work the wrong way; for all this talking and fretting about it is making me worse."

"But it rests with you alone, dear Marian, to end all this."

"I will not end it by giving in. Please, Arnold, be on my side," she pleaded almost tearfully. "Persuade Uncle Lemuel that I shall get better at home more quickly than anywhere else."

"I could not persuade him to that if I tried."

"But try."

"I can not, Marian, for it would be against my own convictions."

"Why is it that you are all so set upon having me away?" she asked, looking steadily at him.

"Because the doctors have insisted on it as absolutely necessary."

"But if the doctors insist on what can not be done—what then, Arnold?"

"Here is the answer to that, Marian—that it *can* be done."

This conversation was being carried on in an under-tone, out of respect for the feelings of the musician. But the vicar, in fact, cared nothing for the attentiveness of his audience; and his woodpecker continued vigorously to tap the hollow oak-tree. The lieutenatnt, sitting beside him, beat time gently with his finger on the arm of the chair, and whispered encouragingly between the verses: "Excellent! excellent! You are very tuneful to-night, Paul." But he glanced all the while out of the corners of his eyes at Marian and Arnold. When the vicar had finished the song, he began it again.

"It is since you came back the second time that Uncle Lemuel has been so ardent about my going away," said Marian.

"No, Marian, no; he has been ardent about it ever since you returned from Cambridge."

"Yes, but it is only within the last two days that he has said positively I am to go. How it that, Arnold?"

"I suppose he was not so clear about the means then."

"And how is it he is so clear now?"

"Well, you see, we have all been talking about it a great deal the last two or three days, and the lieutenant has come to recognize that it is not at all so difficult as he thought at first."

"I don't understand it a bit," she said, and sighed and looked very wistfully and pleadingly at Arnold, as though she knew there were some secret he was treasuring, which she would win from him by the mute entreaty of her eyes.

But Arnold only smiled, and said there was nothing she

needed to learn; she had but to give way and do as they all begged her.

All this while the Rev. Paul's woodpecker continued diligently to tap the hollow oak-tree, and the lieutenant to murmur between the verses that the vicar was very tuneful that evening.

"Tell me faithfully, Arnold," said Marian, "for I believe you know more than I do, whether you think Uncle Lemuel can afford to send me away?"

"I know that he can," answered Arnold. "With some small sacrifice he can."

"And will you not tell me how, Arnold?"

"What can there be to tell, Marian, dear? You go to Madeira for awhile instead of to college, that is all. And even if there were some small sacrifice to be made, what would that be to him? You must think of yourself and of all that you want to do at college. The doctors will not let you touch your books again till you are well, and they say that you will never be well unless you go abroad immediately."

"To whom did they say that, Arnold?"

"To the lieutenant. You will go, dear Marian, will you not?"

"And you, Arnold; would you have me go?"

"How can you ask, after what I have told you? What should I do to know that you were wasting here, with health waiting for you in Madeira? You will go, Marian?"

The lieutenant held his breath as he watched them from beneath his eyelashes; for his instinct told him at what point they were.

"Yes," answered Marian, "I will go;" and with this she seemed quite exhausted, and lay back with her eyes closed.

At the same moment the Rev. Paul's woodpecker ceased its operations on the hollow oak-tree.

CHAPTER IX.

THE ISSUE OF THE SCHEME.

Two days later Arnold returned to town.

No man ever felt more genuinely happy. It had all marched so splendidly; only just a little obstacle here and

there, to try his mettle; and the goal won so easily at the last. Surely no one had ever before carried out so grand a scheme with such a small amount of labor. You see, he had forgotten the details, and the cost, and everything else, at present: in the first blush of victory, the sense and consciousness of success are enough.

He was perpetually slapping himself on the back, shaking himself by the hand, heaping compliment on compliment upon himself. The meanest thing he could be content with saying to himself was that he was beyond doubt one of the cleverest fellows living.

But it was only his cleverness, as he called it, that he praised himself for. To the sacrifice he never gave a thought; would indeed have scorned to call it a sacrifice.

In the office they supposed it was his promotion that had elated him. Mr. Jones was never tired of felicitating him on his managership, and was ready with a hundred little offers of assistance, but his buzzing kindliness evoked no very cordial response from Arnold.

Mr. Trimble was a shade less friendly than he had generally been; he was peevish, and disposed to be exacting. But Arnold had learned to know his employer for a man of many moods; and he set down his slightly altered tone to the prevalence of the east wind.

The lieutenant, in his quiet fashion, was not less full of satisfaction than Arnold.

Marian's consent had been gained; there was nothing now but to arrange for her speedy departure.

He wrote again to Dr. Wilson, thanked him for his kind solicitude, and begged him, if he thought it might be done without offense, to communicate with his friend Mrs. Warren.

A few days later came Dr. Wilson's second reply. Mrs. Wilson had written to Mrs. Warren, explaining the case fully, and Mrs. Warren had said in response that it gave her hearty pleasure to accede to Mrs. Wilson's proposal. She had been half disposed this year to forego her usual visit to Madeira, since the friend who had accompanied her the previous year was unable to join her this winter, and she was growing too old to care to travel alone. She therefore welcomed the idea of going out in company with the young lady of whom her friend Mrs. Wilson had spoken in such cordial terms. Perhaps Miss Dean would be dis-

posed to share with Mrs. Warren the lodgings she had occupied during her last stay in Madeira, which Mrs. Warren had been informed would be at her disposal any time after the middle of January. Finally, if Mrs. Wilson would forward Miss Dean's address, Mrs. Warren would write to her without delay.

"Really, my dear, there are very kind people in the world," said the lieutenant, when he had read this to Marian. "You must, I think, write at once to this benevolent lady, and thank her most appropriately, in your own name and in mine. We have reason to feel much gratitude; and, for my part, I am deeply sensible of the kindness that has been shown us by persons upon whom we have no claim in the world. Not but what I trust we should have done the like ourselves, had a call been made upon us in similar circumstances, and we had been able to respond to it."

"Yes, Uncle Lemuel," replied Marian.

Poor Marian! she really did not know what to think of all this. The kindness of these strangers she felt, perhaps, in no degree less than her uncle; but she was still uneasy in mind as to the promise she had given, and had she not gathered from Arnold's words that to refuse now would possibly be to involve her uncle in greater expense in the future, she would have revoked her promise and declined to go.

By the same day's post, however, she wrote to Mrs. Warren, and the lieutenant wrote to Arnold, acquainting him with the further development of their scheme.

Mrs. Warren's answer came by return of post; five pages closely written, in precise and upright letters; all the *t*'s crossed and all the *i*'s dotted.

"You will find me, my dear," wrote Mrs. Warren, "a little, wrinkled, tiresome, fidgety old woman, plagued with the toothache sometimes, when nobody can bear with me. Why I should go to Madeira I don't know, for, except the toothache, I haven't an ill in the world. But I must be moving about, and if I didn't go to Madeira, I should go somewhere else; and I always have the house cleaned at this time, instead of the spring, and I never could stay at home when there was house-cleaning: and my maids too, are very glad to get rid of me for awhile."

Then followed a descriptive account of Madeira, and a

couple of pages as to the things that Marian would need to take with her. Mrs. Warren concluded by saying that as the steamer by which she would go was to sail on the 10th of January, Marian ought to come to town as soon as she conveniently could, to make her purchases, and have everything ready in comfortable time; and would she stay with Mrs. Warren, who would enjoy nothing better than to do all her shopping for her? As it was of course impossible for Miss Dean to travel to London alone, would Lieutenant Dean also accept a room in Mrs. Warren's house until they sailed for Madeira?

"Such downright goodness of heart I have not known in all my life!" exclaimed the lieutenant, whose breath was fairly taken away; and he hastened off to tell Paul.

Four days later Arnold received the lieutenant and Marian at the Paddington station. She was pale and tired, but in the best of spirits, and very curious to see her new friends.

Mrs. Warren was the owner of a tiny house in Bayswater. In the summer the front of it was hidden under a spreading creeper; a carved brass knocker glistened in the center of the red door, and the two steps looked as if they were scoured twice a day,

An exceedingly trim maid opened the door the moment the cab stopped, and behind her stood Mrs. Warren. She was small, as she had said, and wrinkled; but a pair of bright brown eyes gave wonderful vivacity to her face, and she was as upright as a cavalry officer. She had white teeth, and a rather strong jaw, and her hair—silver gray and thin—was brushed back from her forehead,

"So here you are, my dear; and very tired too, I am sure. And this is Lieutenant Dean, your uncle? Perhaps I ought to say that I am Susanna Warren, and now, my dear, you must be taken to your room at once; and when we have settled you comfortably in bed, Lieutenant Dean and I will quarrel over our dinner together."

And Mrs. Warren, with her hand on Marian's arm, led her upstairs to a diminutive room, where wax-candles were lighted and a fire burning, and the coverlet turned back upon the daintiest bed that ever beauty slept in.

By breakfast-time the next morning, Mrs. Warren had already done much to strengthen her claim on Marian's gratitude. She announced that she meant to be quite as

good as her word in the matter of whatever purchases Marian required to have made. The lieutenant should accompany her; and Marian was to stay at home and rest until the day for sailing arrived.

Mrs. Warren had a way of taking people under her command which made excuse or escape impossible, and the lieutenant found himself marched here and there over town during the task of completing Marian's purchases.

As for Marian, she found it all very strange, but very pleasant and easeful. In Mrs. Warren's small establishment everything was ordered to perfection. A martinet in the kitchen as in the parlor, her two servants were models of neatness, punctuality, and silence. All things were done with mechanical regularity and precision, but so skilled and apt was Mrs. Warren's rule that there was never a sign of strain or severity; everything seemed easy and luxurious. This is the triumph of the good housewife.

At a quarter to eight in the morning Mrs. Warren went down-stairs, and found the parlor-maid waiting with the tea-caddy and the measuring-spoon.

At five minutes to eight she went into the hall and said, in a tone loud enough to be heard in the kitchen: "Those who are ready."

This was the signal for prayers, which Mrs. Warren commenced to read on the stroke of eight, whether the rest of the household were ready or not.

At the last stroke of eight in the evening you would hear the parlor-maid's foot on the last step coming up from the kitchen with the tea-tray in her hand.

It was an ideal retreat for an invalid, and in three days Marian fancied she was well, and told Mrs. Warren she did not think she would go to Maderia.

"We will see about that, my dear," replied Mrs. Warren, with tranquil decision.

Arnold's name had been mentioned by the lieutenant at dinner on the first evening, and the next day Marian was instructed to say that Mrs. Warren hoped he would call whenever and as often as he was at liberty.

Arnold availed himself of this invitation every night.

One evening he found the lieutenant in conversation with a handsome gentleman, whose manner was quiet and rather grave. The lieutenant introduced him to Arnold as Mr. Gilbert Reade, Mrs. Warren's nephew.

Mr. Reade gave Arnold a pleasant, friendly bow, and went on talking to the lieutenant.

"Is it a bad time of year for sailing?" asked the lieutenant.

"It will not be pleasant in the Bay, but I hope we shall sail smoothly after that," replied Mr. Reade.

Arnold pricked up his ears and looked from Mr. Reade to the lieutenant. But neither of them noticed his inquiring glance, and a moment later Mr. Reade rose to leave.

The lieutenant went with him to the door, and Mrs. Warren, coming down-stairs just then, told Arnold that if he liked to go upstairs Marian would receive him.

He went up at once, rather curious about this handsome stranger who hoped for smooth sailing after the Bay of Biscay.

"Have you seen him, Arnold?" were Marian's first words.

"Seen whom?"

"Why, the man, the personal conductor—what is his name, Mr. Gilbert Reade?"

"Oh, yes, I have seen him."

"Well, what is he like, Arnold?"

"He has a brown beard, and a splendid straight back, and seems sparing of his words—who is he, Marian?"

"Haven't you heard? He is Mr. Gilbert Reade, Mrs. Warren's nephew."

"Yes, I have heard that much; but what more of him?"

"Well, I don't know much more, except that Mrs. Warren said last night that he was going to the Cape in the same steamer with us, and would protect us to Maderia."

"Oh!" replied Arnold.

"Why we need to be protected, I don't know," went on Marian. "I think it's rather stupid. He can't protect us from seasickness, I suppose, which is all the protection *I* want; but Mrs. Warren says that 'you should always take a man when you can get him,' and as she has 'got' Mr. Reade, we are going to 'take' him, or rather, I imagine, he is going to take us."

"To the Cape, do you say he is going?"

"Yes, to Cape Town, I think. He is the head of some firm here in London, which has connections out there, and he is going on business."

"Ah, then you won't see a good deal of him, I dare say," answered Arnold, apparently rather relieved.

Those last few days were precious to Arnold, and pleasant, I think, to Marian. It was long since they had enjoyed so much of each other's society. They talked a great deal of all that Marian was to see in Madeira, of what she was to do when she returned with more than her old strength, and of the progress that Arnold was to make in his new position.

But the last day came at length. Marian had benefited greatly by her brief sojourn in Mrs. Warren's comfortable house, and was quite ready for the journey. Arnold obtained a day's leave, and drove with them to the docks.

There for the first time Marian was introduced to Mr. Reade; but a merely formal word passed between them, for Mrs. Warren took immediate possession of her nephew, and dispatched him this way and that, to see that their luggage was properly bestowed, that no one had appropriated their cabin, "and just find out, if you can, Gilbert, whether the captain is a total abstainer."

The signal was given for the friends of passengers to quit the boat. Arnold and the lieutenant were the last to leave. "It is for a few months only, dear," said the lieutenant, as Marian clung about his neck and kissed him.

Then came Arnold's turn; but this was very brief; for the last bell had rung and the captain was impatient.

A momentary clinging of hands—her hand in his two, a close and tender pressure of palm to palm, and the tremor felt beneath the glove.

"Good-bye, Arnold!"

"Good-bye, dear Marian, good-bye!"

"You are not to forget me quite."

"It is I who should say that!"

"Good-bye!"

"Good-bye!"

A few moments later and the moorings had been cast off, and the vessel steamed slowly out of the docks. Arnold and the lieutenant stood together on the quay, bare-headed, their eyes straining to see the last of Marian.

CHAPTER X.

CHUMS IN CHAMBERS.

At about a quarter to five in the evening a certain subdued hum and bustle in the clerks' room of Mr. Trimble's office betokened that the day's work was drawing to a close.

The office-boy got down from his stool beside the door whereon, the last half hour, he had been indulging his favorite dream of chasing the buffalo on the bounding prairie and scalping the Indian in his wigwam; and set the press in readiness for the letters that were to be copied.

The two juniors began to gather up the books and range them in order in the great case which occupied one side of the room.

Mr. Jones finished the private correspondence with which he was generally engaged from four to five, and retired for a few minutes with his brush and comb.

At five minutes to the hour Mr. Trimble's brougham drew up outside, and Mr. Trimble himself was heard to arrange his papers, and then to cross the room to where his hat and coat hung.

Next his hand-bell sounded, and the junior clerk went in to receive the letters.

At the first stroke of five Mr. Trimble came out, buttoning his coat; his invariable formula during the winter months being "Wind still in the east, I suppose."

When he had finished buttoning his coat he said, "G'd-night to you," and stepped into his brougham.

A quarter of an hour later, on evenings when there was no special press of work, the office was generally cleared.

Mr. Jones was usually the first to follow his principal, but this evening he spent an extra minute or two before the glass which he propped up inside his desk to assist him in finishing his toilet.

The juniors had gone, and the boy was sorting the letters for the post.

"Quick with those letters, young Tomahawk," said Mr. Jones, and the eye of Master Jarvis kindled, for he was proud of any word from Mr. Jones.

Mr. Jones adjusted his tie, put the glass back in its place, and took up his hat.

"Now, my little Pathfinder, off with you. Hullo! where did you get that black eye? It *is* a black eye, though you've been trying to whiten it."

"They wos three horfis boys in the row, Mister Jones, an' they hups and cheeks me. An' I says, 'Look yer,' I says, 'I'm a littl' un, but I don't stan' no cheek.' Then I w'oops like wot a Injin do, an' 'its out'ard."

"Ah! the other boy seems to have hit out harder. Do you go to Sunday-school, Jarvis?"

"I kin say six collicks, forrads *or* backuds, Mister Jones."

"Very good. But don't you fight again with any boy who can't do the same. Now scamper. A nice young Arab you to be in our office!"

And Jarvis pocketed the letters and went off, as proud of Mr. Jones as he was of his black eye.

"One like him's wasted on our guvner," said Master Jarvis, as he scuttled down the row. "'E should a bin a Injin chief. Knows all about it, too, *I* lay. Called me young Tomahawk. If he was one of the real Red-uns you'd a'most let him skelp ye for nothink."

Still Mr. Jones seemed in no hurry to leave the office.

He strolled into the little room which had recently been appropriated to Arnold, where Arnold was yet at work.

"Still at it, old fellow? What a horse you are to work!"

"When a man gets his screw raised he must do something for it, you know," replied Arnold.

"Ye-es; p'raps so, p'raps so. But, do you know, if Trim had made me manager I should have been disposed to put the drag on: taken it a little easy."

"That's not quite my way of looking at it; and it's scarcely Trimble's idea, I expect."

"Oh, Trim, no! Trim will get all he can out of you. But you're too conscientious, Lee. I'd see Trim in Chancery before I worked overtime. You don't put enough on to the rest of us. Shift a little more on me, for example: I don't like to see a fellow working himself to death because he's had his screw raised."

Arnold looked up at his fellow-clerk and laughed a free and hearty laugh.

"You're quite too kind, old fellow," he said. "Work won't kill *me*, so make yourself easy on that score."

"Well, don't be squeamish about asking when you want a hand. Put that draft away now and come and dine with me. We'll go to my club; the quietest little place in town."

"Another night. I'll finish the draft before I go."

"As you choose, my young friend. Business before pleasure. That's the motto of all industrious 'prentices who rise to be managers—eh, isn't it? Well, if there's no stirring you, I won't interrupt. I'll go home and dine virtuously with the old lady. But if you won't come out with me, I shall look you up in your own place one of these nights."

"All right; I'll fill a pipe for you whenever you come. Good-night."

"Jones's attentions are becoming emphatic," remarked Arnold, when his friend had gone. "And I fancy he seems inquisitive."

Yes; Mr. Jones was very attentive to Arnold in those days; and he was also exceedingly inquisitive. The truth is, Mr. Jones was playing the part of the cunning hunter. There was game abroad, and he wanted to trap it, but was not yet certain of its whereabouts. He thought, however, that he was on the scent.

While Arnold was away, Jones had carried Mr. Trimble's pass-book to the bank one day. Peeping between the leaves, he had spied an entry which provoked his curiosity in an extraordinary degree. It was an entry of two hundred and fifty pounds with Arnold's name against it.

"Ha! What's that for?" said Mr. Jones. And this same question he was still asking himself, by day and by night, with ever-increasing curiosity, perplexity, and wonderment. Mysterious it undoubtedly was; and who loved to busy himself with a mystery more than Mr. Jones?

"There's a fine secret here, if one could get at it," said he, at least fifty times a day; so he peeped and peered, and put all manner of innocent questions; and, above everything, he tried to get himself accepted as Arnold's philosopher and friend.

But there was a kind of stubborn honest reserve about the young man which Mr. Jones had not yet found the knack of penetrating.

Presently Arnold dismissed Mr. Jones from his thoughts, and gave himself up to other reflections, which were in no way more agreeable. A shadow of uneasiness rested on his pleasant features; the merest cloudlet, but it stayed there.

He pushed his papers away, set his arms upon the desk, and began mentally to pass certain matters in review.

It was a month since he had seen Marian sail for Madeira. During that time he had been working diligently, and yet, as it seemed, unavailingly. He could not understand why he had made so little progress. Little progress? He had made none at all—he had been drifting.

The reader has perhaps tugged at an oar, with wind and stream against him; has strained till the muscles ached, and made no appreciable headway. Who has done this will realize Arnold's position.

Such beggarly results had never followed from such strenuous endeavors. Yet, what troubled him as much as anything, there was no specific failure he could charge himself with. It was merely that the general outcome of his efforts had not succeeded in pleasing either himself or his principal.

Mr. Trimble, he fancied, had been more exacting than of old; irritable, too, beyond his wont.

Nothing gave him satisfaction; he overflowed with petty complaints. Why had Lee done this? Why had he not done that? A splenetic man at all times, he had generally vented most of his spleen on Jones and the junior clerks, but these last few weeks he had reserved it all for Arnold.

Altogether, the lad was disappointed and sore at heart. It was as though some malign influence were opposing him, some hidden thing which he could not baffle because he could not discover and confront it.

But he took comfort, for he knew that his was the strongest place in the office; and come the worst, he was still the strongest man in it.

Was Trimble playing with him, or was this merely his mode of testing him?

"If it is to be a question of endurance," said Arnold, pushing himself back in his chair, and setting his feet against the desk, "he will not quickly tire me out."

He locked his papers into his desk at length, closed the office, and set off to walk to his chambers.

His chambers were in Staple Inn, where he lived with a chum, one Dick Bell, a Government clerk, of good family, who had a salary of a hundred and twenty pounds a year, and was a poet to boot. Arnold and he had shared chambers for three years past, with never a quarrel; one reason why they had chummed so pleasantly being, perhaps, that they had scarcely a taste in common.

Dick was a happy-go-lucky youngster, who spent considerably more than his income on his clothes, and would have lived at the rate of five hundred pounds a year if Arnold had not kept him in check.

By an absurd misarrangement, poet Dick, whose tastes and likings were Capuan, had been appointed caterer to the establishment when they first went into partnership; and Arnold had frequently to remind him that his purchases for the table would have suited admirably a pair of wealthy sprigs in the Albany, but were not at all adapted to the needs of two lean-pursed bachelors in Staple Inn.

They had an occasional small disagreement on this score, and Arnold's domestic peace was further broken in upon by the continuous war which the poet waged with the Irish charwoman who did miscellaneous offices and thefts in their chambers

Life in an old Inn of Court has a certain remote and quiet charm of its own. Dick, the poet, found it tedious; Arnold, the solicitor's clerk, enjoyed it.

The Inns of Court have their own quaint physiognomy, which is not that of modern London. Centuries of change have passed over them, bringing no change to them, save perhaps a deepening of the tints of the houses and a partial blotting-out of some ancient characters. One who visits them for the first time is struck by their grave and sober air, their aspect of gray antiquity, and their seeming remoteness from the noisy world outside. They seem as though they should be little cities of refuge from the toils and burdens and manifold deceptions of the great London which hems them in; yet this assuredly they are not—as many simple folk who have business with the dwellers there find to their cost.

Staple Inn is one of the quietest of them all. A dingy place almost, at least to those who can not see it properly: but Arnold had never found it either dingy or dull.

Its corporate character has long since departed; the old

brown dining-hall, which looks like a chapel from the outside, is closed, and there are cobwebs in the corners of the windows; but the two small squares appear now much as they must have done a hundred years ago. The faces of the houses may be stained a deeper brown, and the stones that pave the outer square may be grayer and more fretted, but the resident of a century ago would have small trouble in recognizing his Inn were he to revisit its glimpses.

Arnold and the poet had their chambers at the top of a high house in the inner square, fronting the patch of garden which stretches up to the walls of the dining-hall.

The ascent to this aërial retreat was by a wide and winding wooden stair, and at every landing there were doors with names printed on them.

The topmost landing belonged to Arnold and his friend, and served them as hall, ante-chamber, and service-room. It was bare of carpet, and was lighted by a barred window about the size of a port-hole.

Arnold always felt, when he turned out of Holborn and entered the low, black gates of the Inn, that he had put the office and its cares behind him. To-night he was especially glad of this, for the office had been a little too much with him of late. But he did not always get the rest he bargained for at home.

As he went through the arched passage leading to the inner square, there broke upon his ear a tremendous fusillade of words in the Irish tongue, ending with:

"Go 'lang wid ye, ye bad, bould boy! For two pins I'd go up an' bate the life out av ye."

"Confound those two! they're at it again," said Arnold.

At the foot of the stairs, grasping the rail with one hand, and shaking a clinched fist at an invisible foe, stood a fat woman, with black hair and a desperately red face, the upper part of her muscular person swathed in a thick blanket-like shawl.

This was Mrs. Fagan, the charwoman. They call them laundresses in the Inns, by the way; but you would have hesitated before accusing Mrs. Fagan of any connection with a wash-tub.

"Well, Mrs. Fagan," said Arnold, with an expression half of annoyance and half amusement, "what is it now?"

"Faix, surr, 'tis Misther Bell—devil comfort him!"

"Is that you, Lee?" shouted the poet from the top of

the stairs. "Send for the beadle. She has watered the milk again!"

"Oh, my! oh, wirra! Do but hear'm?" groaned Mrs. Fagan. "He has the life worrited out av me. Milk! 'Tis yersel' knows, Misther Lee," she went on, appealing to Arnold, "that I wouldn't come near the milk for wurrulds. Oh, wirra! wirra!"

"Hum! The milk has been very thin lately, Mrs. Fagan," said Arnold.

"Thrue for ye, surr; but I hear that same wheriver I go. The mischief's in the milk this good while; but sure that's no fau't o' mine."

"I don't know but the thunder might have had something to do with it," put in the pacificatory Arnold.

"'Troth, 'tis the tunder, widout a doubt, thankin' ye, surr."

"Lee, you're taking her part; I'm ashamed of you!" screamed the irate poet. "I tell you she has fleeced us; the larder's almost empty. Do we eat a loaf at a meal, or two pounds of beefsteak at a sitting, or burn half a pound of candles in a night? Go, woman! I denounce you! Go!"

"It certainly is strange about those candles, Mrs. Fagan."

"Ah, don't be talkin' to me!" broke out Mrs. Fagan again. "Candles, is it? D'ye think I'd be beholden to yiz for dips at fourpince the pound? See here now, the lavin's av yiz both for a month wouldn't be the makin' of one dasent male for me kyat, let alone mesel'."

"Really, Mrs. Fagan," replied Arnold, apologetically, "I believe you're right in that."

"Oh, 'tis I that *am* right, surr, and no mistake. But I'll char no more for yiz—sorra one sthroke more."

"What does she say, Lee?"

"Mrs. Fagan says she is compelled to relinquish her office. She will char no more for us."

"But we have two men to dinner to-morrow; after that she may go hang." The poet's tone, however, was a shade less violent, and he came down to the next landing.

"You really can not leave us at a moment's notice, Mrs. Fagan," urged Arnold.

"Sorra one sthroke more," replied Mrs. Fagan, tightening her shawl in a resolute manner.

"What does she say, Lee?"

"Mrs. Fagan's decision is sorra one stroke more."

"But that is absurd; she can't go till after to-morrow." And the poet descended to the first landing.

"You will put us out greatly, Mrs. Fagan, if you go so suddenly. And really," went on Arnold, "I have often wished that all house-maids had your skill in bedmaking, Mrs. Fagan."

"She has no equal at bedmaking," said the poet. "If she would only leave the cupboard alone."

"D'ye hear that, surr? Cupboard, bedad! 'Twould be a 'cute mouse 'ud find a cheese-parin' there."

"You know, Bell, we have never *seen* Mrs. Fagan at the cupboard," put in Arnold.

"Well, no, that's true; we have never *seen* her there." And the poet put a curly head and round boyish face over the stair-rail and confronted Mrs. Fagan.

"'Tis a terrible sad thing," said Mrs. Fagan to him, "when a good-lookin' young gintleman like you, surr, takes to blackguardin', an' me that has stitched yer buttons on this three year."

"I really think we owe a good deal to Mrs. Fagan, Bell," said Arnold.

"Well, perhaps she has done us a turn or two."

"See that now! I knew ye weren't so bad as ye'd pretend. But I'm for lavin' yiz notwithstandin'."

"Come now, Mrs. Fagan, think better of it," said Arnold, soothingly.

"We'll give you one more chance, Lucy," added the poet.

"Sorra one ha'porth av a chance I'll take from ye," answered the stout Fagan.

"Dick," said Arnold, "didn't we say last night we thought we couldn't get through that leg of mutton?"

"There's a good two pounds of it upstairs this minute," replied the poet.

Mrs. Fagan adjusted her shawl, and prepared to go.

"I wonder," said Arnold, "whether Mrs. Fagan would help us with that mutton?"

"You're fond of cold mutton, Lucy; you needn't turn up your nose; you know you are," said the poet.

"Ye'd be tellin' me to-morrow that I shtole it," objected Mrs. Fagan.

"Suppose you run up and put the mutton in paper, Dick," suggested Arnold.

The poet vanished up the stairs, and returned in a minute with a brown-paper parcel in his hand.

"Put this under your shawl, Lucy, and see that you manage well for us to-morrow," said he.

"Y'are the true gintleman now, Misther Bell; an', savin' yer presences, me darlins, I'd be set up entirely av I had the laste taste o' tay to wash this down with."

"Fetch a pinch of tea, Dick," said Arnold, and the poet disappeared again and returned with half a pint of tea in a cup.

"Tie this up in your handkerchief, Lucy," said he.

"Faix, I will, surr, and the saints presarve yiz both!"

And Mrs. Fagan retired, with her air of injured innocence, and the vanquished two ascended to their chambers.

"That is an exceedingly clever old woman," observed the poet as he turned the handle of the door. "We are no match for her."

"No; it was ever thus," answered Arnold. "And she had our new loaf under her shawl the whole time."

"Yes," said the poet. "That shawl of hers covers a multitude of sins."

"Well, what have you got for supper?" asked Arnold.

"Kidneys, my dear boy; splendid kids."

"None of your kidneys! I want a steak!"

"And a mushroom or two to follow the kidneys."

"Dick, how long am I to stand this? You'll have to give the housekeeping up to me. Two nights ago you spent half a week's supper-money on two dozen oysters, and we had to go out and buy pressed beef when we'd eaten them. You're bringing us to bankruptcy, and starving us into the bargain! A pretty fellow, you, to cater for men with purses like ours!"

"You solicitors are such gross feeders, there's no filling you. For my part, I like to leave off with a feeling of room for a little more."

"Ah! well, that's just the feeling I have after a meal of your providing, Dick."

"And very proper too. Your brain is all the better for my system. Would you have been Trimble's manager to-day if I'd gorged you on beefsteak and porter? Hold your tongue, and wait for these kidneys! Why, what's this? Oh, horrible! Lucy has taken the kidneys!"

He threw open the cupboard as he spoke, and, with long faces, they both looked into it.

"Yes," observed Bell, at length; "Lucy is, without doubt, an uncommonly clever old woman."

"She is more than that," said Arnold; "there is a touch of genius about Lucy. But I see that she has left us the mushrooms—at a certain time of life they are difficult of digestion—and a good half of a stale loaf. Now is your chance to distinguish yourself with the mushrooms, Dick, for I don't think we can afford another supper to-night."

"Good! On second thoughts, though, I'll leave the mushrooms for you, and run up to Russell Square. Cousin Joseph will be sitting down to his mutton in half an hour."

Poet Dick put this resolution into effect at once, and Arnold, left to his own devices, sat down growling to a supper of bread-and-cheese, being quite incapable of cooking the mushrooms.

Supper over, he sat down to put into shape some notes of an essay he was writing for a law journal, for he did a stroke of journalism in his leisure hours, and during some years had supplemented his salary by the small profits of his pen. But his thoughts refused to come that evening, and after half an hour's fruitless efforts he gave up the task, lit his pipe, and sat down by the fire to dream.

"I wonder what Marian's doing now," he said; then, being in somewhat of a fault-finding mood—for he was as hungry as a jackal—he went on to tell himself that he thought she might have found time to send him a line: wondered how much of her society she had given during the voyage to the man with the brown beard, and devoutly hoped that person was now many hundred miles from her at the Cape.

After this he took out of his pocket, and began to read for the twentieth time, a letter he had lately received from his uncle, in which, interlarded with much that was of pregnant interest to the writer, but slightly tedious to the reader, there was here and there a welcome scrap relating to the exile in Madeira, the gleanings of various reports from the lieutenant. There was indeed nothing that the lieutenant himself had not told Arnold already by letter; but the tale was one which bore to be repeated.

". . . Says she is already on the high-road to health.

. . . Place a Paradise, etc. . . . Abundant messages for you, but Lem says he has given 'em to you, and you don't want to hear them twice, I suppose. . . . Grapes pretty near as big as walnuts, and centipedes by hundreds in the bedrooms. . . . Lem quite a new creature since she went, and don't seem pinched in pocket either."

Arnold was still conning these sentences, and trying to form out of them some picture of Marian's daily life in that soft Atlantic isle, when he heard a light and springing step on the stairs, coming in the direction of his room.

"Cousin Joseph not at home, I suppose," he said, returning the vicar's letter to his pocket. "Eh? No; it isn't Dick! Come in!" for the light and springing step had stopped outside the door, which was rapped upon smartly.

The door opened, and Mr. Jones appeared on the threshold.

"Oh, is it you, Jones? Honored, I'm sure, Jones. First time you've looked me up, I think."

"Well, come now, that's too bad, Lee, for you've never given me an invitation."

This, I am afraid, was true. At any rate, Arnold made no attempt to deny it, but he did his best to put on a pleasant face as he got up to receive his visitor.

"I hope you've dined, old fellow," he said; "for the truth is our Abigail has just borrowed the contents of our larder, and Bell has had to go and forage for a dinner at his cousin's."

"Leaving you the cheese-parings, eh? Oh, yes, I've dined, thanks. I get the pull over you there, you see. I live with ma. You must give me a call some evening, Lee. Wonderfully interested in you, ma is."

"Thanks, that's very kind. I hope Mrs. Jones is well?"

"Oh, ma has beautiful health for an old lady. So these are your diggings, eh? Queer I should never have been in them before, isn't it? But then, as I say, you didn't ask me. Very decent diggings, Lee; very decent, indeed. No fear of tumbling over the furniture, but I think you're right there; I hate to see a place choked with furniture. Nice old bit of carpet, this; and you've picked up some rather tidy prints there. Good-looking mantel-piece, that; it's real, I suppose. Oh yes, ma's wonderfully interested in you, Lee."

"Thanks, thanks; it's very kind. But sit down, Jones. You are not going just yet, are you?"

"Not a bit of it, dear fellow. No, I'm chatty to-night."

"That's right," said Arnold, inwardly deploring his friend's inexpugnable sociability. "Let me see, where's that pipe I promised you? You'll find tobacco on the ledge beside you."

"Thanks, I'll fill for myself. Now, this is pleasant; this is domestic; this is the sort of party ma enjoys; and I'm no great stickler for style myself; give me something that reminds one of the family hearth. But I say, Lee, I suppose you'll be shifting from here by and by?"

"From here? oh, no, not a thought of it. What do I want better than this?"

"Oh, it's well enough; but, you see, you've got on to the high-road now—a partnership in view, eh? I fancied you might be thinking of setting up a place of your own."

"No, I have no thought of that, and sha'n't have for a precious long while, I expect. Partnership? No, I don't fancy *that's* in Trimble's mind."

"Ah! shouldn't be at all surprised if it *was*, you know; Trim's fond of you, Lee. Has an oddish way of showing it sometimes, hasn't he? Yes, Trim is crusty; Trim is precious crusty; but don't let that bother you, old fellow. You mark my words, Lee: Trim will do something for you one of these days."

"Do you think so, Jones?"

"Sure of it. And trust me to forward you all I can."

"Thanks; but don't you trouble about that. What I'm to do, I'll do without help."

"There's a spirit for you; oh, you'll get on; you'll prosper, never fear."

Mr. Jones smoked in silence for awhile, and appeared to derive much spiritual satisfaction from the thought of Arnold's future prosperity.

Presently his eye fell on the papers at Arnold's elbow. "Hullo!" he exclaimed, "what's here? *More* work? Literature, too, or I'm a Dutchman. What is it—something in our own line? A treatise on Contingent Remainders; no? Then it's a Guide to Costs; not that either? What is it, then?"

"Notes, a few notes; nothing more," replied Arnold, who relished Mr. Jones's curiosity in very small degree.

"Do you call those a few notes?" said the eager friend. "Well, if those are the notes, it's a big thing you've got on hand. Putting them away?" for Arnold, with scarcely concealed impatience, got up and carried the manuscript to another table. "Well, we'll put them away, if you like. But, I say, what a mysterious one you *are* becoming, Lee? Not quite fair, you know, to an old friend like me. Mysterious? yes, I should think so; and a lucky one, too; engaged by night in producing new editions of legal classics, and by day in drawing enormous sums from a crusty governor. And they do say, Lee"—here Mr. Jones's tone became extremely confidential—"that Trim not only enlarged your screw seven-fold, but, in the fullness of his heart, drew you a blank check by way of Christmas-box. Why, my dear fellow, in the history of Trimble and Trimble, such generosity was never known before!"

Mr. Jones had prepared this bolt carefully, and he watched narrowly for any effect it might take.

Apparently it took none; for Arnold's face was expressionless as he replied:

"No, I should think not; and it hasn't occurred in my case yet. A blank check for a Christmas-box? Pooh? Trimble knows the worth of his money."

But that innocently sly remark of Mr. Jones's had given him an uncomfortable feeling. If he had been reticent before, he became almost silent now; and what talk followed was upon matters indifferent.

Mr. Jones, however, stayed on, and did his utmost to make himself agreeable. He was still smoking Arnold's tobacco when the clock struck eleven, and Poet Dick returned from dining with Cousin Joseph. Arnold had never welcomed him so heartily before; his entry being the signal for Mr. Jones to take his leave.

"Had a pleasant evening, partner?" inquired the poet.

"Oh, a very pleasant evening, Dick; and you?"

"I? Can you ask? Have I not been dining with Cousin Joseph? We commenced with white soup, had an anchovy to follow, and the *entrée* was mutton cutlets *à la Soubise*. If I could prepare a mutton cutlet *à la Soubise* like Cousin Joseph's cook I would never ask to write verses again."

"An ardent poet you, Dick!"

"Yes, indeed; for your great cooks are your only true

poets. What's this? Been working at the essay? Oh, I can't have you stealing marches on me while I'm dining with Cousin Joseph. See; here goes for your labors to-night." And Master Dick took up a full ink-pot and turned the contents over Arnold's manuscript.

"You little villain!" exclaimed Arnold, who promptly seized the poet by the shoulders, and after shaking him vehemently, took him up and carried him to his bedroom, where he locked him in for the night.

Then he went to bed himself.

CHAPTER XI.

MR. JONES.

HE had his beginnings in a little dusty street leading out of the Mile End Road. His vividest memories of his father were associated with a back kitchen and a cane; and he only remembered in connection with the death of that parent that on the day the parish buried him he put the cane behind the fire and broke all the windows of the back kitchen. The fortunes of his mother, at that time a dress-maker in a humble way of business, took a turn for the better when the dissolute father died; and she was able shortly to move into decent lodgings in a reputable street. From that she rose to a small degree of prosperity, being a laborious and thrifty body; and bent all her spare energies, and hoarded her meager savings, to advance her son in life. He approved and seconded her efforts up to a certain point. He was quite willing to wear (and wear out) clothes a little more modish than those of the boys he played with, but he drew the line at church-going. Sunday-school he tolerated when he found that diligent attendance resulted in tangible benefits in the shape of small books with pictures and other spoils.

The books with pictures, he represented to the other prize-winners, were readily convertible into instruments of gambling; and as many as listened to this suggestion parted with their prizes, for Master Jones had a lucky farthing.

In Mile End in those days there were street fights amongst large parties of juvenile desperadoes; but Master Jones was only once caught by the policeman. He went along so meekly that the constable released his arm and

held him lightly by the collar of his coat. In the barracks that evening he told, with something of admiration, how when the station came in sight the prisoner slipped his arms through his jacket and was far away down the crowded street in a twinkling. I am afraid the constable's chuckle would have been heartier could he have heard Master Jones relate to his mother how he had given away his coat to a poor boy who had none.

When he was ten years old his mother made influence with one of her customers, and procured him a free admission to a school under the patronage of a Livery Company. Here the young genius thrived after his manner. He was always at the bottom of his class, but he came out surprisingly well in the half-yearly examinations. The reasons were that nothing was done *vivâ voce*, and the usher who had charge of the room where the examinations were held was very short-sighted. His class-master did not like him, but he was a favorite of the head-master, who thought him a promising pupil, requiring to be brought on with kindness.

In the playground small and weakly boys fled at sight of him, but Master Jones himself was never bullied, for he had a curious knack of ingratiating himself with his elders, and most of his companions, moreover, had learned by experience to believe in a favorite saying of his—that when any boy got the better of him, "something was sure to happen" to that boy. Thus, if he were taken down in class, the boy who was sent above him was almost certain to be caned before the day was out, and most generally for a fault which he was afterward shown not to have committed. If he were accidentally kicked at football he would contrive to sit next the kicker when the lessons were being prepared in the evening, and the contents of an ink-pot were easily diverted over a clean exercise.

At the age of fourteen Master Jones left school. He had not taken a scholarship, nor made any considerable addition to the slender stock of intellectual acquirements with which he began, nor won any prizes for athletics; but he had contrived year by year to strengthen the kindly feelings which the head-master had shown toward him from the first; and that discriminating pedagogue was at great pains to obtain for him a situation in a Government savings-bank.

It was not a high situation, nor a lucrative one, but the head-master in parting with him assured him that many men had amassed fortunes whose start in life had been less auspicious. Master Jones replied modestly that he was not covetous of riches, and that his chief aim would be to give satisfaction to his employers.

"This lad," said the head-master to himself, "has not been four years under my care for nothing."

He gave him a copy of one of Dr. Smiles's works, and half-a-crown wrapped in paper.

So Master Jones began life as a clerk in a Government savings-bank. He assumed a stiff collar, and a walking-stick with a tassel, and his mother's delight was to watch him strut down the street at half-past eight A.M., very scornful of the boys he had played with four years before.

He was at this time a slim, white-faced youth, with freckles and a shifty eye.

He was always punctual at the bank, and was not above helping the porter to carry the ledgers out of the safe before the other clerks arrived.

The manager marked him for a promising assistant. The junior clerk generally had something to do close by the manager's room when that gentleman arrived at half-past ten, and begged the privilege of assisting him in removing his coat.

At all mere mechanical work he was apt enough, when he took the trouble to learn it; and, as a high order of intelligence is not demanded from junior clerks in a Government savings-bank, he soon made himself proficient.

He was polite to all the customers with whom he came in contact, received the shillings and half-crowns of the humbler depositors with as much *empressement* as if they had been bank-notes. Of all women with babies he inquired after the health of the infant, and said he had heard his mother remark that weaning was a very trying process.

He posted up the ledgers with scrupulous neatness, and was never guilty of a blot.

But at the end of two years the junior clerk left the savings-bank at short notice. No one but the manager and the chief cashier ever knew the reason, and they were reticent.

At this point a hiatus occurs in the history of Mr. Jones's life.

He was sixteen when he left the Government savings-bank, and we are without a record of his career during the next two years. It may safely be conjectured, however, that he became dependent on his mother, whose careful savings he was at all times willing to spend.

"One of these days, ma, you shall ride in your carriage. Don't you be afraid; I'm going to take care of you," he used to say, and Mrs. Jones put her handkerchief to her eyes, and asked whether any mother ever had so good a son. She believed in him, from the roots of his sandy hair to the tips of his boots, and, to do him justice, Mr. Jones was always very fond of his mother. Affection the most sentimental is compatible with any and every degree of infidelity.

The reader might be gratified by an assurance that the savings-bank escapade contained no flagrant dishonesty. Not at all. It was merely a plan of supreme ingenuity by which the accounts of the bank in Mr. Jones's department might be thrown into such irretrievable chaos that a clerk in the secret could have done as he pleased until the next audit.

Widow Jones was more than satisfied with her son's story of the termination of his connection with the bank; perceived, indeed, that his superiors had wholly (and she feared willfully) misunderstood him, and was secretly glad that he had escaped from a position which offered no scope for the exercise of his singular and exceptional talents.

There are stories—which I am disposed to regard as apocryphal—that for eighteen months or so from this period Mr. Jones was the "X. Y. Z., 300B, City Road," who through the medium of advertisements in remote provincial journals offered to show for twelvepence in stamps how the sum of half a crown might be converted without risk or labor into the sum of twenty pounds.

These stories lack confirmation, and may therefore, I think, be discredited, though it is certain that at about this time Mr. Jones became a gentleman with a large correspondence, and the cane with the tassel was discarded for a cane with a silver knob. It is beyond question, too, that he was well known at this time to the landlord of a small sporting tavern in Islington, where in the bar-parlor the "Turf Guide" was the subject of nightly consultation by a coterie of young men who were inventing an invaluable

scheme for winning large sums on the race-course, the scheme to be divulged on the payment of five shillings to the proprietors. This might perhaps be explained by the circumstance that he was collecting information on low life in London for one of the directors of the City Mission.

At the end of two years our friend was once more in smooth waters. We find him not a whit less assiduous than of old, in a somewhat responsible position in a solicitor's office in Bedford Row.

He was neater than ever in person, grave and subdued in manner, alert and prompt, and abundantly painstaking. The master of St. Prendergast's, who shared Mrs. Jones's opinion that he had been wrongfully dismissed from the savings-bank, had given him a spotless testimonial; his faultless address had done the rest.

But his new situation did not please him. The firm was a small one, and but recently established, and the prospect of advancement was distant.

The main part of the building was occupied by the substantial and old-established firm of Trimble and Trimble. Jones set his heart on entering this more promising firm. He took many small opportunities to throw himself in Mr. Trimble's way. He was in the hall or on the stairs when Mr. Trimble entered or left his office, and would hold open the outer door for him with a respectful bow. When Mr. Trimble had occasion to be present in court young Mr. Jones was often able to procure him a cab, and having seen the portly solicitor safely bestowed, would tell the cabman in an under-tone to "drive carefully." Sometimes when coming up the street behind Mr. Trimble he would skip on in front and whisk a bit of orange-peel out of the way. By and by Trimble nodded when he met him, and Jones's pleased but quiet "How do you do, sir?" in response to this recognition, made a due impression.

"This seems a polite and worthy youngster," Mr. Trimble used to say to himself. "Looks a smart fellow too; I'll keep an eye on him."

Pains and patience brought their reward.

Mrs. Jones was now tolerably well off. The dressmaking business had thriven, and the widow had her showroom, as well as her shop, and a staff of assistants. She had some skill in designing, and exhibited a variety of artistic bedizenments at a show of feminine costumes, which

brought fashionable custom to her doors. A friend of Mr. Trimble's eldest daughter, between whom and her own dress-maker a serious difference had occurred on a question of trimmings, recommended the young lady to apply to Mrs. Jones, and the ball-dress which Mrs. Jones made for Miss Trimble elicited a word of critical approval from Trimble *père*.

How strangely are matters ordered!

A difference arising out of a question of trimmings was predestined to furnish a comfortable berth for Mr. Jones in the office of Trimble and Trimble.

Mrs. Jones had a pleasant confidential way with her customers, and dropped a word or two which interested Miss Trimble in the career of the widow's only son.

Mrs. Jones did not hesitate to refer to the affair of the savings-bank—a sad misunderstanding which had taken place between her son and the manager, occasioning much pain to the lad himself, and compelling him ultimately to throw up his situation. Mrs. Jones honestly believed that this was the cause of her son's leaving the bank.

Such an excellent son! And had such a beautiful testimonial from that great school-master and benevolent man, Dr. Birchall, of St. Prendergast's. And was now in the office of Messrs. Gulpin and Green, who were more than satisfied with him, but with whom Mrs. Jones feared he had little chance of rising to the position for which his talents and great trustworthiness fitted him in an eminent degree.

"Gulpin and Green! Oh, no, indeed! There is no chance for any one there, I should think. A very poor firm. I believe papa has an opening for a good clerk," said Miss Trimble.

How strangely are matters ordered!

Miss Trimble interested Mrs. Trimble, and they both opened fire on Mr. Trimble.

"You might just give him a trial," said Mrs. Trimble.

"You know how you admired the dress Mrs. Jones made for me," said Miss Trimble.

"How you bother me, you two!" growled papa. "I'll have nothing to say to him. Don't suppose he knows more about law than either of you do."

Mr. Trimble was quite unaware that the young man for whom his wife and daughter were beseeching his interest

was the same who had won his good feeling by divers small acts and graces during several months past.

He stood a fortnight's siege and then capitulated, with a surly permission to the effect that "the fellow might call on him if he liked." The fellow called, and was admitted to Mr. Trimble's sanctum, who, when he recognized him, engaged the young man almost on his own assurances.

Jones—no longer "Master;" but Mr. John Turnbull Jones—gave his present employers a month's notice, and entered on his new duties.

Thus, comfortably for him, had issued that difference of Miss Trimble with her dress-maker on a ridiculous question of trimmings. Jones, the indefatigable and unfathomable, quickly set himself to improve the now shining hour; and before Arnold's arrival he was literally master of the situtation. Hs had a very inconsiderable smattering of law, yet at times he was a cause of bewildered (not to say alarmed) admiration to Mr. Trimble, for the surprisingly sharp things he did. Shakespeare has a line somewhere to the effect that a cheat may wear the semblance of a king, until the king is by.

In the course of time Arnold arrived—king honest man.

His presence, as soon as he was well installed and understood his work, spoiled the place for the vulpine Jones.

By and by he became the inmate of Mr. Trimble's own room, whereas Jones was outside with the clerks.

Arnold was a student, who gathered store of the right sort of knowledge every week; Jones was a trickster, who relied on the cunning of his wits.

Arnold had a clear head; Jones was a mere strategist. Arnold was a gentleman; Mr. Jones was a genteel young man.

Trimble, with a dogged good-nature underlying his subacid disposition, persuaded himself that he valued them both.

Within a few years Arnold qualified for practice of the profession, while Jones remained a servant. An invaluable servant, though; ready, resourceful, and willing, and, as Trimble said sometimes, "He knows a precious deal more about my business than I know myself."

Some six months before the commencement of this story a little incident happened which altered the course of Mr. Jones's life. In confidence to the junior clerk he

sometimes alluded to it as "a most unfortunate accident."

It chanced that one evening, after office hours, Mr. Trimble, instead of driving home as usual, walked in the direction of Charing Cross. Turning out of Chancery Lane into Fleet Street, he was seized by an importunate client of saloon-haunting proclivities, who insisted on having a chat about that case of his. In vain Trimble protested that he knew not the name, meaning, or business of law after 5 P.M. The client would take no denial, and dragged the unwilling and expostulating solicitor into The Octopus, a glittering restaurant within a hundred yards of The Griffin.

Mr. Trimble was ignorant of the very existence of The Octopus. He hated restaurants—a teetotaler of the strictest. Total abstinence, they say, accounts for unmitigated dryness of disposition.

He found himself installed in a luxurious fauteuil before he had time to do more than protest with vehemence that he "could *not* transact business in such a place;" and he was just protesting again, when he heard a voice that he knew.

Mr. Jones, by all the verities! And Mr. Jones himself, in a hilarious condition, the center of a more hilarious group of young gentlemen, engaged in the high pastime of chaffing a bar-maid.

There was an indignant exclamation from the girl in response to some practical impertinence of Mr. Jones's. That gentleman's voice, ordinarily subdued and mellifluous, had a ringing coarseness which jarred on the ear of his employer.

There was a roar of laughter from Mr. Jones's satellites, a little scuffle, and then an angry shout from Mr. Jones himself, as he was repelled with a smart box on the ear.

Mr. Trimble, galvanized into spasms with a sense of shame and disgust, felt his own ears tingle.

As Jones approached his friend, the manager of The Octopus, with his complaint of "the incivility he had received," Mr. Trimble rose and pulled his client away.

"Come and dine with me at my own house, or anywhere but here. In such a den as this I can not and will not remain."

The next morning, before he opened his letters, Mr. Trimble rang his bell and inquired for Mr. Jones.

Mr. Jones went in, innocent as a dove.

"Where were you at half past five last night?"

"On my way home, sir."

"Where were you at five-and-twenty minutes past five?"

Jones saw that he had been dismasked, but his answer was prompt and cool.

"In the bar of The Octopus, sir, endeavoring to protect a young woman from insult."

"Indeed! The young woman did not seem to me to relish your protection."

Mr. Jones's hand went suddenly to his ear, impelled by the instinct that makes a thief start when his shoulder is accidentally touched in a crowd.

"That was meant for somebody else, sir," he sneaked.

"It was not. I saw what I saw. You may go."

Mr. Jones heard no more of that incident, but in less than a month from the time, Mr. Trimble made up his mind to put Arnold—now practically qualified for the profession—into the post of authority.

Mr. Jones had suffered inestimable loss of status, and was only beginning to recover at the time when our story commences.

But he knew now what sort of conduct in any man would lose him the favor of Mr. Trimble, and that was knowledge which might be turned to account—if one could but find the way.

CHAPTER XII.

A DEED OF SETTLEMENT.

On a Saturday in the first week of March, Arnold left the office at eleven o'clock, by arrangement with his principal, and started for the West by the midday train.

He had been hoarding for this trip for three weeks past.

The spring was just breaking, and the air was soft and kindly. Arnold was glad to escape, though but for a few hours, from the mountain of small troubles that had been pressing on him lately. Frequent differences with Mr. Trimble, though trifling enough to have passed unnoticed at any other time, had depressed him, and he was puzzled

and irritated by the curious conduct of Jones. Jones seemed to be always in consultation with Mr. Trimble; it was as though the manager and the clerk were beginning to change places.

Nevertheless, when he had put the office behind him, and found himself carried out of town into the stillness of the country, his spirits rose, and he persuaded himself that all this disquiet was foolish and groundless, the result only of a little overwork. He was cheered by the persistency with which the lieutenant had supported his uncle's invitation to spend a day and night with them at home. The lieutenant in his letters seemed always anxious to see him; was always referring to what Arnold had done, and hoping that he had not suffered in any way by his generosity.

When he was leaving the office that morning Mr. Trimble had gone out of his way to tender him a singular piece of advice.

He had obtained leave without difficulty when he made known that he wanted to go for a day to Three Dykes.

"Ah, yes—to see your uncle. Glad you're fond of going home, Lee," Mr. Trimble had said; and added, "My dear Lee, be careful to consult your uncle if you are in doubt on any matter—if you have any difficulty that you can not surmount."

While the train flashed westward, and Arnold sat in the corner of the carriage in a brown-study, he recalled with a laugh this droll advice of his principal.

Consult Uncle Paul! As well consult the parish grave-digger.

It is a fortunate thing for us sometimes that we can not see far beyond our noses. It is well occasionally that we know so little what things transact themselves outside our immediate circle.

In Bedford Row Mr. Jones was buzzing round Trimble incessantly while Arnold was out of the way. Mr. Jones was glad that Arnold had taken a slight holiday. He never wanted holidays himself, for when he was in the receipt of a permanent salary life itself was a perpetual holiday. No one seemed busier, or did less, in the office; so, as he was never overworked, he never needed a change. But he did not grudge a holiday to his fellow-clerks, for in the absence of any one of them he always begged Mr. Trimble to "put a little more on to him."

Mr. Trimble honestly believed that whatever the faults of his chief clerk might be, he was an energetic and industrious worker, who was rather pleased than otherwise if he were called on to take more than his share.

When Arnold was away Mr. Trimble showed no inclination to repel the willing and unctuous Jones.

A day or two before, Jones had picked up a scrap of manuscript beside Arnold's desk, where it had fallen as he was putting on his coat. He recognized it at once as a bit of Arnold's literary work, and he treasured it.

On the afternoon of the day that Arnold went to the country Mr. Trimble was busy; but he permitted Mr. Jones to ask whether this morsel of paper was "likely to refer to any important matter." He "had found it beside Mr. Lee's desk," just after Mr. Lee had started for the country, and he knew how scrupulous Mr. Lee was never to devote a moment of time in Bedford Row to a matter not connected with law.

Mr. Trimble took the paper and merely scanned it through his glasses, then returned it, and said with a gruff ejaculation:

"Ugh! Don't know. Nothing to do with my business. Some rubbish of his own. Dropped it by accident. Keep it for him. Busy."

Mr. Jones thanked his principal, and apologized for troubling him. He would put the paper in Mr. Lee's desk. He no doubt would be unwilling to lose it, for Mr. Jones knew what a great interest Mr. Lee took in his important literary work.

"Eh, whose important literary work?"

"Mr. Lee's, sir."

"H'm! Ugh! H'm! Didn't know he had any. What time has he for important literary work?"

Mr. Jones hastened to reply that he had perhaps said rather more than he ought to have said. He thought Mr. Trimble was aware how much of Mr. Lee's energies were given to his literary tasks. Not that he thought Mr. Lee allowed his private work to interfere in any way with his duties in the office; only it had been well known to him, and he fancied to Mr. Trimble also, that Mr. Lee added to his income by literary work. Most important, too, that he should do so, Mr. Jones thought: for he knew Mr. Lee's

personal expenses were rather heavy—lived in chambers, for instance, which were always costly.

At this point Mr. Trimble's better self rose within him, and he cut Jones short with a brief "No business of mine, this: not your business either, Jones. Keep the paper for him. Busy, busy."

Mr. Jones retired with the paper in his hand; but he had shot that little bolt of his and was content. Jones could take a snubbing as well as any man.

Mr. Trimble went home at his usual hour; Mr. Jones having intimated that as Mr. Lee was away he would remain behind to close the office.

The chief clerk's face wore an expression of placid happiness when he was left alone in the office that evening. It was his good-nature.

"I'm glad Lee went for a little holiday," he murmured, as he strolled out of one room into another with his eyes in all places at once.

He strolled into Arnold's room, and Arnold's desk was unlocked. There was no reason why it should be locked, for this was a private room that Mr. Jones was invading.

He opened the desk and explored it. There was nothing there except a mass of papers relating to the business of the office. Amongst these was the draft of a settlement to which Arnold had been devoting himself at intervals for a week past in order to meet the wishes of that eccentric and irritable client, Admiral Græme.

In overhauling the desk, Mr. Jones found that there was a hollow place at the back, in which a document, were one to drop in by accident, might be effectually lost.

Into this oubliette, in a careless and merely tentative way, Mr. Jones dropped the draft of Admiral Græme's settlement.

"Dear me! It has really gone down," said Mr. Jones. "Who'd have thought a paper of that size would disappear so easily!"

Then he put the rest of the papers in order again, and closed the desk, and the office.

"I'm glad Lee went for a little holiday," murmured Mr. Jones, and he went home to tea with his mother.

CHAPTER XIII.

FROM OVER THE SEAS.

"Is the lieutenant at home, Phœbe?" inquired Arnold.

He had walked across from the Vicarage after breakfast to have a chat with his friend before church-time.

"No, sir; he's gone to Sunday-school."

"Then I can't see him until after church," returned Arnold. "I think I'll go to Sunday-school myself."

"It would do you good, sir, I'm sure," rejoined Phœbe.

The lieutenant's class was the most popular in the school. In all parochial matters he was a strong support to the vicar; in the parish, indeed, he had made his influence widely felt. Parson Paul, in whom I fear the clerical element was in no way dominant, found the lieutenant's help especially valuable at this time, when the new bishop was vigorous in demanding and promoting reforms, both social and religious, which were calculated to shake to its center the prehistoric conservatism of Three Dykes.

The lieutenant's character supplemented in many needful respects that of his friend the vicar. He had what may perhaps be called the Evangelical instinct. He brought to the work of the parish certain spiritual requirements of the finer sort which were wanting in the parson; and he labored with that sympathetic, unobtrusive, self-effacing earnestness which is a badge of the true missionary. Paul was a capital worker in his own rough hap-hazard fashion; the lieutenant followed after him, and gave completeness and finish to what the vicar had but begun. Together, in a word, they made one first-rate parish priest. If in a few matters the vicar was somewhat of an unclerical parson, the lieutenant was certainly an unmilitary soldier. By what irony of fate had the vicar failed to be Major or Colonel Brunskill, and the lieutenant to be the Rev. Lemuel Dean? But, in fact, family reasons were at the bottom in both cases.

The lieutenant was the son of parents who, when the time came for him to start in life, had been able to command sufficient influence to obtain him a cadetship in the East India Company's service; while Paul Brunskill had

grown up with the knowledge that the little living of Three Dykes, of which the patronage was in the hands of a distant relative, would be his as soon as he had qualified himself at Cambridge to hold it. Thus were matters ordered for them both.

Arnold went to Sunday-school, and took his place in the lieutenant's class, which he had sat in when a boy; and, as Phœbe had suggested, it did him good, for it awoke some pleasant memories.

"You are coming to lunch with us, lieutenant?" said he, after service.

"Paul has said that I am to go," replied the lieutenant; "and after luncheon I have something for you which I think will be pleasant."

"What is that, lieutenant?"

"A long letter that I had yesterday from our exile."

"That will be very nice," replied Arnold.

Accordingly, after luncheon, the lieutenant—not without an anxious glance at Paul, who was already settling down for his customary thirty minutes' doze—produced from his coat-pocket an envelope of great size and bulk.

"What's this?" asked Paul on the instant.

"A letter from Marian, Paul, which I had yesterday. I thought that, as Arnold returns to London this evening, he would perhaps like me to read it to him."

"Let's have it, then," returned the vicar. "From the thickness of the envelope, it appears to be a long letter."

"There are—hem!—there are some fifteen or sixteen pages of it, Paul," replied the lieutenant.

Parson Paul said no word, but rose up and rang the bell. "Make up the fire," he said to Keturah.

"Now, Lem, the letter," he added, when Keturah had well replenished the fire.

"It is dated," said the lieutenant, "like the previous letters, from the Hotel in Funchal where Marian and Mrs. Warren are staying," and he proceeded to read as follows:

"'I am going to begin this while Mrs. Warren is out for her morning stroll. She has been in great dudgeon for a day and a half because the mail arrived without bringing her any letters, and she says her friends always do forget her when she goes a few hours' journey from London. Besides that, she is very angry with the cook (who has hitherto shown her marked attention) for sending up three dinners

in succession without one of her favorite dishes. So she has just started out in the direction of the Praça, forty miles an hour, which is thirty-nine miles faster than any horse goes in Funchal. By and by she will be bartering violently for bananas and muscatel grapes with one of the fruit-women, and then she will be perfectly happy. She takes the best possible care of me, and we have become immensely fond of one another. All the fruit-women and hammock-bearers and pony-boys in the town know her, and are delighted with her. She is perpetually angry with the natives, collectively and individually, and does not in the least mind what she says to them; but as she says it in English and looks so pleasant while she is saying it, they take it all in a complimentary way, and the men stand, with their foolish little caps in their hands (under a perpendicular sun), and grin, and call down all kinds of blessings and prosperity on her—'"

"This lady," interrupted the vicar, "appears to be a very capable chaperon."

"I think," added the lieutenant, "that Marian could not have found a better."

"Go on with the letter, lieutenant," said Arnold.

"'As for me, I have just eaten my second breakfast, and am sitting by a window open to the ground, with the sea before me, and great purple and brown mountains behind me, in the midst of a garden which is like nothing so much as the enchanted gardens in the fairy tales I used to read to Lucy long ago. You ask me what the garden is really like, but I am quite unable to tell you. If I described it as a color-dream, you wouldn't understand that, would you?—at least, I should not understand it myself if any one used the term to me. And you would not get a much more distinct idea if I were to tell you that all the loveliest flowers in Mr. Brunskill's greenhouse, and ever so many more, overspread it, as Mrs. Warren says, "in really wasteful profusion." When the Cape steamers call here, the passengers who come on shore for a few hours are allowed to gather as many as they please; but when a dozen or twenty of them have filled their arms with double geraniums, lilies, daturas, bougainvilleas, bignonias, fuchsias, myrtle, and I don't know what else, you would not believe that a single blossom had been plucked. We have a hedge of double geraniums, and an-

other of pink cacti—what do you think of that? We have palm-trees, camphor-trees, nettle-trees, and gum-trees, and can pick the oranges from their own boughs. For all this, I miss the music of birds in the branches and the hum of bees amongst the flowers. There are other drawbacks too in this paradise of ours. The people who have been here any length of time seem to grow as dull and drowsy as Tennyson's lotus-eaters. Every other foreigner you meet has an ailment of some sort, and all the victims talk of their own and each other's complaints. The doctor, who, with the exception of Mrs. Warren's friend, the cook, is the most cheerful man in the town, spends the greater part of his visit to me in discussing the cases of his other patients, and expects me to overflow with interest when he tells me that Madame A. was so much better yesterday that she ate a whole pine-apple at dessert; or that he has had to tell Mr. B. this morning that the wisest thing he could do would be to make his will. This mania for taking sickness is rampant in the person of our Portugese chamber-maid, whose first inquiry when she wakes me in the morning is a strictly professional one respecting my "healthy." She asked me one morning, when I was feeling aggressively well, whether I thought I should die here or wait till I got back to England, and when I replied indignantly that I had no intention of dying here or anywhere else, she said, "Me, I ting the death not so hawful bad neither. Eve'y-body muz die some day. Dey *got* to do it. *Mais*, I not dispoz of dyin' myse'f till I get a 'uzban' to give me proper berril"—'"

"There is some inkling of philosophy in this chamber-maid," observed the vicar.

"For my part, I think the young woman needs a little Scriptural instruction," said the lieutenant.

"You shall send her my last Easter sermon on Immortality," responded Paul. "Marian will translate it for her."

"Go on with the letter, lieutenant," said Arnold.

"'With the chamber-maid's arrival in the morning begins the business of eating. You will all be horrified at what I have to say on this head, but as I am nothing if not a veracious chronicler, I have no course but to confess that we eat six meals every day of our lives. These do not include casual fruit repasts at odd hours of the day and night. The chamber-maid leads off at a moderately early hour of

the morning with tea or coffee and a roll. Breakfast proper is a movable feast, ready at whatever hour you come down. Lunch happens somewhere about the middle of the day, and there is tea again in the afternoon. Seven o'clock dinner is the principal event of the day, but I am unsophisticated enough as yet to enjoy it chiefly for the marvelously beautiful way in which the lights and flowers are arranged on the table. After dinner there is tea in the drawing-room. Mrs. Warren says we owe it to the proprietor of the hotel not to trifle with the food, but I always feel ashamed of sitting down to dinner. They give us fifteen varieties of fish in the course of a week. Mrs. Warren knows all their names, and can distinguish between them, but to me they taste pretty much alike, and have the flavor I should expect to find in stewed blankets. But all the meals are exceedingly good, and I am in a fair way to become a gourmand—'"

"I hope the child will not make too free with this superfluity of victuals," remarked the vicar.

"I think Marian will scarcely do that," replied the lieutenant.

"But she may do it in a foolish, heedless way, for lack of rational occupation," said Paul.

"Marian had always a very small appetite," observed Arnold. "But go on with the letter, lieutenant."

"'Our days are passed in unmitigated idleness. There is something in the air that makes one feel not only that one does not want to work, but that one really does not know what work means. It takes two peasants nearly a quarter of an hour to say "How do you do?" to each other. They stand cap in hand (the men wear ridiculous little skull-caps stuck on the top of their heads, with long appendages like a rat's tail) until they have received full particulars respecting the health of wives, children, relatives, friends, and household animals; they then invoke a blessing on each other and move off. They are exceedingly polite to strangers. If you meet a solitary peasant in a quiet street he says: "May God prosper you!" without the smallest provocation. But the only active people in town appear to be the hammock-bearers and the runners with the sleds or ponies. There are various methods of getting about the town and island for visitors who are too weak or lazy to use their legs. I am in the former category at

present, and the moderate amount of sight-seeing I have done has been with the aid of a hammock slung on a long pole, with a peasant at either end. The doctor will not let me ride yet, and so far as progress through the town is concerned, that is no great hardship, for the Government fines you twelve shillings if you let your horse trot in the streets. The fine, I am told, has been instituted solely for the foreigners, since it would be bootless to impose a twelve-shilling penalty on a native. The hammocks are preferable to the *carros*, conveyances like four-post bedsteads placed on runners and drawn by oxen, for the streets are so steep that wheeled vehicles are out of the question. As Mrs. Warren says she is too old to sit on a horse, and refuses to lie in a hammock, and declares that the whole military force of Funchal would not compel her to enter a *carro*, she has no choice but to walk. This demands some heroism (to say nothing of the toil of climbing), for the roads are composed of big beach pebbles stuck upright in the ground; and as there are no side-paths, pedestrians have to contest the streets with the oxen. Mrs. Warren's bearing, however, is so undisguisedly British that the oxen simply look at her and make for the other side of the road.

"'As for the sleds, they are modes of travel we have not yet ventured upon, and I think are not likely to. The Portuguese chamber-maid is very anxious for me to try one; but the chamber-maid's chief delight is a funeral, and as there have been fewer deaths than usual this winter I think she must be hungry for fresh victims.

"'The sled is, I suppose, the most breathless mode of travel in existence; it looks to me worse than riding on an avalanche. The thing itself is a little basket-work contrivance, with a seat wide enough for one, two, or three persons. It is placed on wooden runners and accompanied by a pair of guides holding check-strings at each side. To watch one of these machines whirling down an almost perpendicular mountain-road, lurching up against the stone walls at either side, and shooting round a bend that is almost a right angle, makes you pant open-mouthed and hold on in instinctive sympathy to any stout object within reach. For those who like to travel whirlwind fashion the sled, no doubt, has its advantages, for you descend a road in five or ten minutes which it has taken an hour or more to toil up on horseback; but if there were no other manner

of getting down than this I should not look forward with much satisfaction to the prospect of mountaineering.

"'One of our daily excitements—Mrs. Warren's and mine—is to watch the descent of a very fat wine-merchant from his villa in the hills. His doctor, no doubt, has ordered him violent exercise, so he goes to his place of business in a sled. We look on with glasses from the garden. His wife and children always come out to see him start, and their leave-takings are prolonged and tender.

"'He is so fat that he fills entirely a seat meant for two persons, and when he is wedged in there is scarcely any room for his packages. At the steepest part of the road, when the runners stand with one foot on the edges of the sled, and guide it with the other, sometimes shouting at the top of their voices, he clings to the sides and shuts his eyes tightly. We can not see the end of the road, but I suppose he always reaches it in safety, for we see him start at the same hour every morning—'"

"This appears to be a very venturesome style of traveling," said the lieutenant. "I fear this poor gentleman will break his neck some day."

"Of that," replied the vicar, "he must take his chance; being, as it seems, a very fat man."

"He has probably insured his life," said Arnold. "Go on with the letter, lieutenant."

"'Mrs. Warren says that as the wine-merchant has afforded us so much entertainment, she will feel it her duty one day to find out his place of business, and buy some of his wines.

"'Our excursions hitherto have been of a very modest kind. Indeed, we have not made any expeditions at all, for the doctor has been very strict with me, and forbidden any but the shortest outings. But it is pleasure enough to be carried slowly through the steep streets, where the houses are painted white, and pink, and yellow; between hedges of flowers; under arches that connect rival gardens, golden with bignonia and purple with bougainvillea. It is a real Moorish town, and I have not been able yet to believe that it is quite real, with its palm and spice and orange trees, and dark-haired women hanging over the balconies.

"'In the evening we have sometimes strayed into the poorer quarters of the town, and watched the peasants col-

lected about their doors to hear native love-songs sung by a strolling musician, to the accompaniment of the national *machete*, a sort of little guitar with four strings.

"'But as the sanitary arrangements of Madeira, and especially of the native quarters, are open to improvement, one is liable to be warned by one's nose against penetrating too far in search of the picturesque. For a similar reason it is almost impossible to walk on the beach, as the natives have a barbarous habit of depositing much of their refuse there.

"'These things serve to remind us that our paradise is an earthly one, and give Mrs. Warren an opportunity of writing indignant letters to the governor. I don't think the governor is the proper person to write to, but the cook, who is her principal adviser in all local matters, tells her that she may as well write to him as to anybody else. The authorities don't trouble themselves at all about nuisances of any sort, because, as they have grown used to them, they refuse to believe in their existence. All appeals are sent to Lisbon, where there is a permanent official to read them, and put them in pigeon-holes—'"

"If they had our bishop out there," interposed the vicar, "these things would be remedied."

"A zealous bishop," observed the lieutenant, "is a very great boon."

"But let him keep his zeal within bounds," responded Paul, mindful of a recent visit to his ecclesiastical superior.

"Go on with the letter, lieutenant," said Arnold.

"It is nearly finished," replied the lieutenant, and went on:

"'I would ask you to send me some of my books, but, in the first place, the doctor will not allow me to touch a book for the present, and, in the second, I am afraid I should have to pay more than their value in customs dues. The authorities atone for their laxity in the matter of nuisances by their assiduity in collecting dues and taxes from the foreigners. But I shall make the doctor take off his embargo very soon, and then I shall ask you to forward me a small parcel. I am getting ashamed of my idleness, because I am so much better that there is really no excuse for it. They say the air here is almost as perfect all the year around as it is now, but I feel as if it had been made on purpose for me; and I should be a shocking

ingrate if I had not begun to mend in the very first week of our arrival. The nights are as delicious as the days. The sky is so clear that the stars seem twice as big and bright as at home, and we sit by the open window long after the sun has set, though we are only in the second week of February.

"'How long I shall be content to remain in absolute idleness I do not know. At present we are not living, but merely existing—existing on six meals a day. It is a most humiliating thought, and if it were not for fear of Mrs. Warren I would cut off three meals at a stroke. Please tell Phœbe that though the cook claims to have served under three kings and an emperor, his beef-tea is not as good as hers. My dearest love to you, good Uncle Lemuel, and my kindest remembrances to Mr. Brunskill and Arnold. You would not believe how homesick I am sometimes.

"'P.S.—Mrs. Warren has just come in with a letter from Mr. Reade, brought by the Cape steamer, asking permission to stay a few days with us on his return.'"

"Is that the end?" inquired the vicar.

"That is the end, Paul," replied the lieutenant.

"Then by your leave, Lem, I'll ring for tea, for your mouth must be dry."

"Thank you very much, lieutenant," said Arnold; but he would have enjoyed the letter more if there had been no postscript.

Later in the afternoon, when they were alone for a few moments, the lieutenant took opportunity to say to Arnold.

"My boy, what is the matter with you? You are not looking so well as when you were last here; and you seem not in such good spirits? What is it, Arnold?"

"You see too much, lieutenant," laughed Arnold. "There is nothing the matter."

"You will forgive me for saying that I think there is. You do not look well, Arnold; and you have talked but little to us."

"Well, perhaps, I am a trifle overdone, lieutenant. We have been very busy lately; and I have been keeping long hours at the office. I have more to do than I had before, and my responsibilities have increased. But I am all the better for running down here. Marian's letter is good medicine."

"You have had no cause to regret what—what you did

for her and me, have you, Arnold?" asked the lieutenant, anxiously.

"Nothing in the world could make me regret that," replied Arnold, emphatically.

"It is truly and generously said," quoth the lieutenant, "and I thank you, Arnold. Yet sometimes I have a fear that I did wrong in taking that great sum from you."

"What, lieutenant, and with Marian growing every day better?"

"For that I am deeply thankful, every day and hour of the day," answered the lieutenant. "But you know that is not all I think of."

"Let it be all, then, lieutenant—at least, do not think of me. On the day I feel the first twinge of repentance for my share in our scheme I'll drown myself in the Thames."

"That day, my dear Arnold, I am sure will never come. But I hope the day will when Marian may know all that you have done for her."

Arnold hoped so too, for he was resolved that she should never know unless she became his wife.

CHAPTER XIV.

"SUCH A THING NEVER HAPPENED BEFORE."

"WHAT did I do with that settlement of the admiral's?" Arnold turned over the papers in his desk, but could not find the draft. He did not look very closely, and felt sure, though he had failed to discover it, that the deed was somewhere there.

"I put it in here on Saturday, just before I left," he added; and then, remembering something else that he could work at for the present, he thought no more of the admiral's settlement. He had reached town early that morning, after spending the night in the train, and was at his post at his usual hour. His mind was a good deal occupied with his own affairs, but good and zealous worker that he always was, he had come back vastly refreshed, and with a sturdy resolve to make light of petty ills.

He thought that run into the country had done him good; but Marian's letter had been the real tonic. He had

banished the postscript from his thoughts; dubbed himself a jealous fool for letting it worry him at all, and said it was mean of him to grudge her a little fresh society. He had begged the letter of the lieutenant for a day or two, had gone to sleep in the train with his hand in the pocket that held it, and had read it again on his way to the office that morning. It was good medicine, the knowledge that Marian had begun to live again, that in a few short months (he called them short, though he knew they would be very long) she would be back again, and then—ah! what then? The future does not lift its veil—for which, on the whole, we may be thankful.

Mr. Trimble had asked for him when he had arrived at ten o'clock, and in his crusty fashion had shown himself pleased that Arnold had not overstepped his leave by so much as half an hour. Mr. Trimble set great store by the punctuality of his clerks, which was one reason why he had always regarded Mr. Jones as an excellent servant.

Mr. Jones paid a visit to Arnold in his room, and said he was very glad to see him back. He did not know how it was, but somehow the office never seemed itself without Lee.

Then, with a genial air of mystery, he produced an envelope from his pocket, and took out of it Arnold's scrap of manuscript.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Arnold, recognizing his property, "where did you get that?"

"Well, fact is, Lee," replied the honest friend, "Trim picked it up here last night, and, seeing your writing on it, told me to keep it for you. Of course *I* knew what it was—a bit of the literary business, eh?—but I was very close with Trim about it, as you may think."

"I don't think that you need have been," answered Arnold, throwing the paper into his desk.

"Oh, it was necessary, dear boy; *very* necessary, I assure you. Bless you, Trim would have gone on in no end of a way. You know how he hates to think a man's earning anything outside the firm. Besides, he'd have fancied you'd been cribbing an hour or two out of office time, and that would have made him rusty. He was curious about it, I could see. But I was close as bricks and never said a word."

"Well, I'll talk to him about it myself," answered Arnold.

"Not for the world, man; not for the world! Why, he knows nothing. What's the good of disturbing him?"

"If he's curious, he may as well be told. There's nothing to keep from him," said Arnold. "I never write a line for myself till I've left the office."

"Just so; then there's no need to say a word. Trim's the queerest fish. If you talked to him about it without his asking, he'd be sure to think there was something you wanted to explain away, and then he'd be as inquisitive as a rat."

Now, whatever motive might have prompted this advice, Arnold was aware that it was good. Mr. Jones knew his master better than he knew any book. Arnold decided to accept his counsel, and let the matter drop.

"Thanks, Jones," he said. "Perhaps you're right. Though if Trimble ever says anything, he can learn whatever he wants to know; and it won't trouble him."

For all that, the conversation left Arnold with a slightly uncomfortable feeling. He had not been so much in Mr. Trimble's good books of late that he could afford to risk any further exclusion from them through a mere misunderstanding.

The morning crawled on with the ordinary humdrum occupations of the office.

Presently, a good deal earlier than the hour at which clients usually called, a tremendous rat-tat at the outer door brought Master Jarvis from his perch to the floor with a bound that would have done credit to one of his red men on the war-path.

"Mr. Trimble in, hey, boy?"

"Yassir. This way, sir," and, preceded by the office-boy, Admiral Græme entered and passed through the office like a nor'-easter.

"How da do, Trimble? how da do? That ridic'lous settlement of mine—have ya got it anywhere about? I'd like to look at it again before ya put it on parchment. Some ridic'lous fresh instructions to give ya."

This was audible all over the office, for the admiral habitually talked as though he were addressing a man at the masthead, without his speaking-trumpet, from the quarter-deck.

"Where *is* that draft?" said Arnold; and opening his desk began to search for it in earnest.

Presently his door was rapped, and Mr. Trimble came in, having the admiral in tow.

"That draft of Admiral Græme's settlement, Lee; where is it? Admiral Græme wishes to amend his instructions."

The admiral was a very small spare man, as brown as a walnut, with close-cropped gray whiskers and tiny gray eyes, and as upright as a mast.

He stood stiffly in the middle of the room and waited for his draft.

"I am getting it, sir," replied Arnold, rummaging desperately amongst his papers. But in plain truth he was not getting it, for it was not there.

He grew red and redder as he turned his papers over unavailingly for the fifth or sixth time. Mr. Trimble stood behind him, outwardly calm, but beginning to rage within. The admiral was one of his best clients; and in any circumstances such an exhibition as this was calculated to tarnish the dignity of the firm. The admiral stood in the middle of the room and hummed a ballad of the main.

Arnold shut his desk; the draft was not there.

Then he unlocked his drawers; one after the other, and turned the contents of each upside down. But the admiral's draft was not there.

Mr. Trimble twisted his mouth into the painful semblance of a smile, and, turning to the admiral, said with a violent attempt at humor:

"You see, admiral, we use extraordinary care in stowing away your papers."

"Yas, yas; seems so, Trimble, seems so," responded the admiral.

"It would never do to put them where any casual person might come across them—an office-cleaner, now, for instance, or any stray visitor."

"So you put them where you can't find them yourselves. Ha! ha! Capital, Trimble, capital!"

Mr. Trimble winced, but made as though he appreciated the joke fully.

"But come, Lee, come," he said, "you have shown Admiral Græme how carefully we have put his papers out of

sight; I dare say he would be glad if you would produce the draft now."

The admiral, who was a frequent caller at the office, had on many occasions been much prepossessed by Arnold, regarding him as a limb of the law whose tender juices had not yet been hardened into wood.

Not being on the quarter-deck and half disposed to accept Trimble's suggestion that this was a little comedy got up for his diversion, he had looked on with an air of gratified superiority, thinking that when the game had been kept up long enough young parchment would duly unearth the document.

"Really, sir," said Arnold, "I am afraid I can not produce it for the moment. I left the draft in my desk on Saturday, and—"

"One of those casual parties," interposed the admiral. "The office-cleaner, for instance, or one of the stray visitors."

"Ah, just so, admiral. Very kind of you to put it in that way. But the truth is, I dare say, Mr. Lee has taken the document away to work on it at home, while he fancies he left it in his desk. Such a shocking fellow to work Mr. Lee is. There's no keeping him from it, in or out of the office. This is a little accident, admiral, which I am sure you will allow for, and favor us with another appointment at your convenience. Or Mr. Lee here will wait upon you, if you prefer it, and receive your further instructions at your own residence."

When the admiral saw that he was to be balked of his draft after all, he began to fume fiercely. If Jones and not Arnold had been the defaulter he would have raked the office fore and aft, and had every document in the place exhumed until his own was found.

As it was, he let off a little strong language, and finished with a parting thrust at Trimble.

"This," exclaimed the admiral, with a sweep of his arm and a snap of his fingers, "this is your boasted British jurisprudence!"

And with that he went out like a sou'-wester.

Mr. Trimble retired to his own room and rang the bell instantly.

"Mr. Lee," he said to the boy.

Arnold presented himself, but for a minute or two his principal took no notice of him. Then he broke out:

"During the five-and-thirty years I have sat in this room such a thing as this has never happened before. Keep a client waiting while you fumble for his papers in desk and drawers, and oblige him to go away after all! And a client of Admiral Græme's humor! I shall never hear the last of it. It is preposterous. I am very seriously annoyed, Lee."

"I am not going to say that you have no cause, sir," began Arnold in response, when Mr. Trimble interrupted him testily.

"I should hope not indeed. I think you know better, Lee. Such a thing as this is utterly inexcusable."

Then the subacid and jealous disposition of the man fairly conquered him, and he exploded violently.

Jones, as we have seen, had done his best to sow the field full of poison seed two days before. What he had said had led Mr. Trimble to suppose that Arnold was no longer giving him his best energies. That bit of manuscript had been made to play its part. Trimble had been inspired to think that Arnold was serving some other master better than he was serving him. That literary business so adroitly put forward by Jones had rankled in his thoughts; and, above all, he was angered that Arnold had steadily, and as he felt, obstinately refused to make him any "confession" on the subject of the loan.

"Our relations in the past two months," went on Mr. Trimble, now fairly boiling with small wrath, "have changed as I have never known the relations of gentlemen to change for any ordinary cause. I say, Lee, for any ordinary cause. Your extraordinary conduct with regard to that loan, which, in a moment of unpardonable generosity, I was induced to make you; your absent-mindedness in recent weeks; your inattention—for what else can I call it?—to professional business (I say to *professional* business)—what am I to make of all this? It convinces me that there is something grave at the bottom of it all, something that I ought to know. You had far better make a clean breast of it, and tell me everything. If another loan is needed," added Mr. Trimble, sarcastically, "it had better be asked for at once."

"I am much obliged to you, sir," replied Arnold, "but I do not need any further help in that way."

"I am glad to hear it," said Trimble, dryly.

"As to the draft, sir, you have full cause to complain. I take the blame, of course, but I am convinced that it is missing through no fault of mine. I *know* that I left it in my desk when I went on Saturday."

Mr. Trimble had a manner of expressing skepticism which was the more irritating that it was so exceedingly polite. There was the least perceptible flutter of the eyelids, and a slight uplifting of the corners of the mouth; after which Mr. Trimble drew out his watch with great deliberation, and compared it with the clock on the mantelpiece.

"I must have that clock looked to," he said, and added, slowly, "there's no trusting it any longer."

When Mr. Trimble had delivered himself thus, his clerks knew that further argument was useless. They knew, moreover, that this was his mode of expressing his conviction that they had designedly, or otherwise, committed themselves to a statement of the thing which was not true.

Arnold bowed, and went out. He was very indignant. This was the first time Mr. Trimble had shown a disposition to cast doubt upon his word.

The impression which this incident produced in the office was profound. It was the first time that Arnold had publicly discredited himself.

In the evening, when the others had gone, Mr. Jones came in and sympathized.

"Queerest thing I ever heard of," said Mr. Jones. "But let's have a look together; you must have missed a corner somewhere."

"Not a cranny," answered Arnold, rather curtly.

"Well, but now, my dear fellow, you left it here, and here it must be. Hullo! what's that?"

Arnold had just lifted the lid of his desk, to put it in order for the night, and Mr. Jones pointed to the hollow place at the back.

"It couldn't have got down there very well; but have you looked?" he asked.

Arnold leaned over carelessly and looked down. At the

bottom of the deep recess lay the draft of the admiral's settlement.

"Not there, I expect," said Jones. "Eh! why, you look scared. *Is* it there?"

"What made you think of this place?" asked Arnold, suddenly, and half angrily, as he turned and confronted Jones. "I never noticed that hollow before."

"No more did I till this minute," rejoined the easy-conscienced one. "Lucky I happened to see it, wasn't it? Can we fish the nasty thing up? Given us a lot of trouble to-day, hasn't it?"

"Thanks, don't trouble, I'll manage it," said Arnold; for Mr. Jones was preparing a noose with which to snare and haul up the paper.

"Well, don't look so sour over the thing, man, now that you've found it. You'll be able to make it up with Trim to-morrow; though, to be sure, Trim has a mean way of remembering these things. Ah! you've got it. A plaguy thing! But I thought we'd hunt it up between us. Two heads always better than one, you know. Well, I'll be off now; good-night, dear fellow. Tra-la-la-la-la-la." And Mr. Jones put on his hat and sidled out of the room, singing as he went.

"I'll keep this desk locked in future," said Arnold, putting his resolve into effect as he spoke.

He had a disquieting feeling that he had somehow or other been tricked in this matter. The place where the paper had lain was one into which, if thrown hastily in the desk, it is just possible that it might have fallen. The probability, however, was all the other way, and Arnold was never careless in the disposition of his papers. But he was not likely to know more about it than he knew at present. "Jones was very quick with his suggestion," he said; but he did not care to conjecture further. Only he was put more keenly on his guard, as one who feels treachery from an unknown enemy.

He locked up the office and went home.

The east wind drove through the streets, nipping and biting you viciously, assailing you at unexpected turnings with a quick succession of little spiteful blows, darting out from by-ways, having at you everywhere, so that you had scarcely repelled him at one corner before you had to sum-

mon all the heat you had in your body to withstand him at another.

Arnold buttoned up his coat (he had meant to get a new one at Christmas), and went home as fast as he could.

He had been wondering lately for how many weeks more home would lie in the direction of Staple Inn. His purse had been growing leaner and leaner; it suffered from the galloping consumption, for which Falstaff said he could get no remedy.

He had cut, and pared, and eked, and stinted, yet the money began to go faster than it came. Living at a cheaper rate than before, he barely met his weekly charges. His half-share of the expenses in chambers was already more than he could fairly pay. The chambers must be given up, and he decided to broach the matter to Bell that evening.

But a scrawl in pencil pinned over the chimney-piece, requesting Arnold to "stand the coffee on the hob," was an intimation that Bell was out for the night; so the subject, like the coffee, must be kept warm till the poet's return.

Arnold paced the room for an hour or more, and was in a fair way to think himself into a fever. At length he settled down to his pen, feeling that the time might be coming when that would be his main support.

CHAPTER XV.

A PROBLEM IN HIGH MATHEMATICS.

If only something would happen. But nothing ever happened. If the sun would leave off shining for one half hour. But the sun never left off shining. If even the fruit supply could be interrupted for just two days, that one might try to forget the taste of rose apples and guavas. But even Mrs. Warren appeared with fresh bunches of grapes, a foot long and eight pounds in weight; and ever when one came down to breakfast there were the girls just arrived from the mountains with strawberries newly gathered. If the fat wine-merchant with his sled—but let him alone; he has sorrow enough with his sled.

Marian sat in the garden of the hotel, a pearl in the heart of a glowing bouquet, and looked as disconsolate as

the princess in the fairy-tale, who could not pull the sun out of the sky to play with.

It was the fretfulness of joy; there was really nothing worse the matter with her.

Life was too serene and golden in that enchanted island, where the sun is never too hot by day, nor the air too cool by night; where the oranges may be picked from the trees, and the grapes are as big as brazil-nuts; where fifteen varieties of fish (all tasting much like stewed blankets) are served up in the course of a week, and robust invalids eat whole melons after luncheon; where the sky and the sea are one unchanging blue; where geraniums grow twenty feet high, and fat and sober wine-merchants whirl to their counting-houses in sleds, down perpendicular mountains, twenty, forty, and fifty miles an hour.

Marian sat in a low wicker chair, with a letter from home in her lap, which she had just finished reading. She plucked a rose and picked it to pieces, and was cross because there was not breeze enough to carry the petals away. She gathered a crowd of young lizards about her chair, and fed them with biscuit, until an old bloated fellow frightened her by dropping plump into her lap from the branches of an oak, and swallowing the largest piece at a gulp.

She drove away the lizards, and lay back in her chair, and gazed up at the bare blue sky which never a cloudlet dimmed; then her eyes wandered over the vine-clad hills, and she counted as many villas as she could see up there, nestling white amid their fairy gardens of red and purple and gold. A gaudy butterfly went lazily sailing from rosebush to jasmine, from jasmine to hibiscus, lit for a moment on the edge of a lily, and floated over the high hedge of geranium. The light of a perfect sun streamed over this perfect garden, and scarcely a leaf was shaken in the warm and quivering air. But there was no hum of insects amongst the flowers, no trill of birds in the trees, almost the only sound that Marian heard was the droning "Ca, ca—ooa—ca para mi, boi" (Come—whoa—and come here to me, O oxen) of the boys guiding the bullocks in the *carros*, as they climbed the steep and slippery streets.

"I would give three days' dinners and one dessert for a shower of rain that would wet me through," exclaimed Marian at length.

"When Gilbert comes, my dear child, he will take us up the mountains, and there you will have more rain than enough," answered Mrs. Warren, coming up behind her with a basket of nectarines.

"Is the Cape steamer expected?" asked Marian.

"The cook says she can not arrive for several days yet."

"Does the cook know anything about it?"

"My dear! He is the only person who does know. I shall not believe the steamer is in sight until I see the cook coming upstairs to hang out the Union Jack."

"And is Mr. Reade coming by the next steamer?"

"If he doesn't, I have made up my mind not to receive him."

"You can scarcely receive him, dear Mrs. Warren, if he does not come."

"I mean when he does come, of course, dear."

"Will Mr. Reade amuse us, I wonder?"

"I shall insist upon his doing that," replied the gentleman's aunt. "Though I don't think," she added, "there will be any need to insist. Gilbert is so good-natured. You did not see much of each other, I think, either on the steamer or during the few days he was with us?"

"He asked after my health every morning on the steamer," answered Marian; "but the stewardess was the only person I was really intimate with during the voyage."

"Yes, you poor child; you suffered a great deal. That Bay of—"

"Don't recall it to me, dear Mrs. Warren. It is more than sufficient to remember that I have to go through it again. And Mr. Reade was so provokingly well the whole time; positively enjoying it!"

"Yes, dear, but he has traveled so much. He has been everywhere, and seen everything, and done everything."

"And made a fortune besides," said Marian.

"Oh, Gilbert could make a fortune every month in the year, I believe, if he chose to," replied Mrs. Warren. "But he says he is so tired of making money. He would never have taken the trouble to become one of the richest diamond-merchants if it had not been for the excitement. He said it was such splendid work—outdoing all the others at the diggings."

"I am afraid he is of a combative turn," observed Marian.

"No," said Mrs. Warren, "I don't think he is combative, as you call it, but he does not like to be beaten. At least that is what he used to say in the old days when he set out to make his fortune; but I don't think he cares at all about it now. As for money, I think he became rich too quickly to set much value on it. He leaves his business now very much in the hands of his partner, and has in fact ceased to care about getting fresh riches at an age when most men are beginning to hunger for them. Let me see, how old is Gilbert now? Thirty—thirty-one—thirty-two—thirty-three: he must be just thirty-four. He has spent the last two or three years in travel, and is probably getting tired of it; indeed, I don't think he would have gone to the Cape just now if I hadn't wanted him to bring us here. I hope you and he will get on pleasantly, dear."

"We only had two conversations before he left for the Cape," said Marian, "and nearly quarreled in one, and quarreled in the other."

"You surprise me, dear!" exclaimed Mrs. Warren; "I never knew Gilbert to quarrel with any one. I don't recollect your telling me of this."

"I had forgotten it long ago. I should not have remembered it now but for your reference to the cook."

"The cook, Marian?"

"Well, the cook and the steamer. I mean that I should not have thought of it if you had not begun to speak of Mr. Reade's return."

"And what was it all about, dear? I am shocked to think you and Gilbert should have quarreled so soon."

"Oh, it was nothing serious. We differed on a question of mathematics, that was all. Mr. Reade suggested that I had been wasting my time, and of course I did not like that. Dear me! is not Madeira a dull place?"

"You foolish, contrary child!" said Mrs. Warren. "Only a week ago you thought it the dearest place in the world."

"A week is a long while—in Madeira."

"There, run away and write your letter home; that will put you in a good humor. It will be lunch-time when you have finished, and after lunch we will go and do some shopping."

"But there is nothing new to buy. We have got mats

and embroidery and baskets and inlaid work enough to stock a villa."

"A villa!" exclaimed Mrs. Warren. "Happy thought! We will try a change of scene. We will leave the hotel and take a quinta a little way up in the hills. How would you like that?"

"It would be delightful," rather languidly.

"Very well; that is what we will do. After lunch we will go and look for one. Now run away and write your letter. I'm going to the reading-room to look at the papers."

And Mrs. Warren moved out of the shade of the oak, and put up her umbrella and marched away to the reading-room.

Marian got up from her chair and went slowly toward the house to fetch her writing materials.

But she found on looking into her case that she had exhausted her stock of foreign note-paper. Here was a new grievance, which our fretful patient made the most of. But presently she remembered that she had put away a reserve store in one of her boxes, and unlocking it, she fetched out a small bundle of papers—college memoranda, scraps of exercises, and the like, with a few sheets of note-paper scattered amongst them.

Rummaging in these she shook out a half-sheet of exercise-paper, covered with figures and symbols, the neatest imaginable. She picked up the paper and looked at it carelessly, and then with closer and more curious interest when she saw what it was.

It was the problem in high mathematics over which she had broken down. It was worked out with the neatness of embroidery, with the exception of the last two or three figures, in writing which the pen had suddenly begun to falter.

Marian very well remembered writing those last figures, and the feeling of darkness which came over her all in a moment; then the getting up from her chair, the sensation that everything in the room was breaking up and the floor giving way under her feet; and after that she could recall nothing.

Very singular feelings crowded in upon her as she looked at that almost forgotten relic of the winter. She shuddered, for the memories it awoke were painful. But she

had no long time to spend in this fashion, for it was mail-day, and she had her letter to write. She put away the problem, and sat down at her desk to write to the lieutenant. She wrote three or four sentences, then her pen stopped, the brain no longer guiding it; she could not get the problem out of her mind.

She finished her letter hastily, promising a long and important one by the next mail; then took the problem out again and set it in front of her.

An irresistible curiosity impelled her to try and work it out. She began on it at once; it was a task not more difficult than many similar ones she had accomplished with ease in her early days at Cambridge.

But she had now hardly braced her mind for the effort when she realized that at that moment she knew no more of high mathematics than an infant. She might as well have set herself to climb Pico Ruivo on foot as to work out that problem.

She did not give it up, though, until she had completely tired herself, the result being a headache and worse depression. But she hid the effects of these from Mrs. Warren, and exerted herself to appear more cheerful, for she meant to go to work again in secret, and Mrs. Warren must suspect nothing.

For several days she tormented herself with that miserable problem in high mathematics, to no purpose, except the destruction of her peace of mind, and the bringing on afresh of the old symptoms of mental prostration.

Now this alarmed as well as mortified her. She had seemed to be making advances, both physical and mental, during the past few weeks, not only steadily, but rapidly; yet here at the very first trial of her strength, she had broken down as hopelessly as ever.

Then the thought of the future rose up before her, and she asked herself what would happen if she were to continue thus helplessly and hopelessly incapacitated.

All her past efforts had gone for nothing; everything must be begun again; and at present it did not appear as though she would ever have strength to begin.

How long was she to loiter in this fool's paradise?—for Madeira was nothing better if it could not give her back the health she was seeking to recover. Ought she not to make haste to return, that further needless expense might

be spared, and cast about for some commoner and humbler method of supporting herself than the scheme she had set her heart on?

Her ambition was to take a high place in the sphere of education; to be a leader in a woman's college or mistress of a great school; and her career at college, so far as it had run, had given her reason to hope for success in such a province. But hope seemed vain in the midst of weakness like this.

The end of it all was that Mrs. Warren had found her in tears one morning, with the *fons et origo mali* beside her.

"Heyday! What's the matter, child! Have you eaten a bad peach?" exclaimed the practical chaperon.

Then she picked up the paper containing that unlucky problem, and looked more puzzled than ever. Mrs. Warren's first thought was that this was a love-letter of an unpleasant nature written in cipher.

"Don't cry over it, dear," she went on. "I dare say if you could read it rightly you would find it a very pleasant letter; though why he should have taken the trouble to make you miserable with a scrawl of hieroglyphs like this, I don't know."

"It—it isn't a letter, Mrs. Warren," said Marian, with a rather woful smile, as she dried her eyes.

"Then what in the world *is* it, dear? I never saw an uglier-looking bit of paper in my life."

"It is a—a problem in mathematics."

"A WHAT, my love?"

"A problem in mathematics, Mrs. Warren."

"And you mean to tell me that I have found you in a flood of tears over a problem in mathematics?"

"But I could not do it, Mrs. Warren."

"I should think you couldn't indeed. I should be ashamed of you if you could."

And Mrs. Warren proceeded then and there to explode in this fashion: "Pooh, my dear! Pooh! I repeat, poo-ooh! It is the most ridiculous thing I ever heard of in my life. All the mathematics that are, or ever were, are not worth two tears, let alone a flood. I have cried over rule of three myself, to be sure, but that was fifty years ago, when I didn't know any better. But mathematics at your age, and in a climate like this, and crying over them! Pooh! Mathematics, indeed! with geraniums twenty feet

high; and pine-apples as cheap as potatoes, and two fine hammock-bearers ready to carry you all over the island, for love almost! Tear the thing up, and throw it to the lizards."

"But, Mrs. Warren," pleaded Marian, still rather tearfully, "you do not understand. All my future depends on these things. I could do this problem once, and then my future was assured to me. I knew that I should not be any longer a burden to Uncle Lemuel, and that I could do something for him in return for all that he has done for me. And now I can't do problems any more, and—and—oh! I don't know what will become of me."

Marian finished this amid a fresh flood of tears, and sobbed so violently for a moment or two that she woke a lizard dozing a few yards off, who came up blinking to know what was the matter.

Mrs. Warren perceived that the trouble was more real than she had imagined, and hesitated a moment before she replied. But she was a sensible old lady, and saw at once that, whether or no the issues depending on the solution of the mathematical problem were as grave as Marian described them, there were immediate issues of a much graver sort likely to result from this accession of nervous excitement in the present delicate state of her young charge's health.

The ebullition was evidently the outcome of much pent-up anxiety and suffering, for which, on the whole, it was well that a vent had been found at last.

"You know, my dear," said Mrs. Warren, stroking the soft brown hair of the girl, "I ought to begin by lecturing you severely for doing what the doctor has expressly forbidden you to do. But we will come to the lecture by and by. By and by, too, we will talk about the future, and what may be dependent on your being able to do this extraordinary thing in mathematics. But for the present, you see, our only business is to have you well again, and that will never be accomplished in this way. Here you have been worrying yourself into a brain fever almost over the very work which your uncle told me brought on your illness at Cambridge. Did not the doctor strictly forbid books or work of any kind? You have made yourself believe, now, that you are ever so much worse than you really are. If you had waited a few weeks I dare say you would have been quite well able

to do this atrocious thing in mathematics—at least, if it be possible for any one to do it. You have been acting very wrongly, my dear child, and I take great blame on myself for not having kept a better watch over you."

Marian took this reproof very meekly, and, indeed, felt rather better for it. It gave her some hope that her incapacity to work out problems in mathematics might not prove so hopeless or enduring as she had tormented herself into believing.

She pleaded that she did not think she had been doing such great harm, and added that Mrs. Warren really did not know how necessary it was that she should get well as quickly as possible, and be able to return home and begin to work for herself.

Now this was a point Mrs. Warren had been anxious to approach, but delicacy of feeling had kept her from it.

"I should like to say something to you about that, dear," she began, "if I may do so without offending you."

Then she went on to suggest, as tenderly and diffidently as possible, that if monetary considerations were a cause of anxiety to Marian, it would be a sincere and lasting pleasure to her to be allowed to remove that cause. "I am an old woman, and childless, and have more money than I know what to do with," she added at the close.

Now, of course, Marian could not be persuaded to listen to any proposition of this sort, but it warmed her heart a thousand-fold toward the author. Kindled in this fashion, she grew communicative, and told all about herself and her life—a great deal more than she had ever told before. This led to confidences on Mrs. Warren's part, and in a little while they knew all about each other. Mrs. Warren had her own story—a story of early and passionate love, ill-requited after marriage; the sudden and somewhat tragic death of the husband who had neglected her; and a widowhood of forty years, lived for the most part in solitude.

In that intimate talk the bond between them strengthened, and friendship merged into affection.

"And now, dear," said Mrs. Warren, presently, when Marian was in the sun again, "I am going to talk to you like an old worldly woman—"

"No; for then you will not be talking in your true character," interrupted Marian.

"Oh, yes, I shall; you don't know how worldly I can be when I choose. Well, then, it seems to me, Marian dear, that you are not at all the sort of girl who need trouble her head about mathematics—I really can scarcely say the word with patience—as a means to an end in life. Mathematics is not the vocation for a girl like you."

"Well, provide me with another, please, Mrs. Warren."

"Marriage, my dear; marriage!"

"Mathematics *versus* marriage? I think I prefer mathematics, Mrs. Warren."

"Really, my dear," said Mrs. Warren, with some degree of asperity, "one would think it was a question between figs and dates! You can't make up your mind in that off-hand way between marriage and mathematics."

"Yes; because I don't feel the slightest hesitation. Between figs and dates I might waver, for I'm fond of both. Now I am fond of mathematics, but I have not the smallest inclination toward marriage. I am not 'dispoz of it,' as Nita might say. Mathematics, if I can but get well, will provide me a living at once—and a good one, for I mean to be tremendously clever at them. Marriage might or might not provide me a living, and in any case no one has proposed to marry me, and I might pine for years without the ghost of an offer. So, you see, there really is a good deal to justify my choice."

"My own opinion is," said Mrs. Warren, with a show of being sternly emphatic, "that young ladies nowadays are allowed far too much freedom, both of choice and action. Now, if it were a hundred years ago—and I really often wish it were—I should prevail on Lieutenant Dean to let me make you my daughter; and then I should at once go about to find you a suitable husband, and marry and settle you comfortably in the course of six weeks."

"I have no doubt you would do all for the best, dear Mrs. Warren," replied Marian, in a submissive tone, having no need to fear such a summary and peremptory disposal of herself and her future.

"And I don't think, my dear child," resumed the old lady—"I don't think I should have very far to seek."

"Eh? Oh! What do you mean, Mrs. Warren?" laughed Marian.

"Well, there is your cousin, a most proper young man, if eligible in other respects."

"Cousin? What cousin, Mrs. Warren?"

"Young Mr. Lee, of course, dear. I took a great fancy to him."

"But he is not my cousin."

"Oh-h-h!"

"We are not related at all."

"Oh-h-h-h!"

"What made you think we were cousins, Mrs. Warren?"

"Well, dear, you seemed so cousinly."

Marian laughed, but made no further reply.

"And I always fancied, dear," continued Mrs. Warren, "that there was a tie of some sort between you; indeed, I thought rather a close tie."

"What kind of tie, Mrs. Warren?"

"Well, dear, forgive me, but I had an idea that you were engaged to one another."

"Engaged! Oh, no, Mrs. Warren," with the merest suspicion of a blush. "There has never been anything of that sort between us. Why, Arnold and I have known each other since we were children."

"That may be, dear; but he is not a child now."

"No," said Marian, "but then—"

"Depend upon it, my dear, he has a very strong regard for you."

"We are both fond of each other, I think," answered Marian, unhesitatingly. "Arnold is nicer than almost any one I know. I think I ought to write him a letter."

"Have you not written to him since leaving England?" asked Mrs. Warren.

"No, we scarcely ever write to each other now. But it is just the same as if we did; because he writes to Uncle Lemuel, who sends me his letters; and I write to Uncle Lemuel, who sends him my letters."

"So you and he are just friends, my dear?"

"Y-yes, Mrs. Warren; but," she added, after a moment's pause, "the best of friends."

Mrs. Warren said no more on the subject.

She sent Marian upstairs to rest, but not until she had extracted a promise from her to let problems in high mathematics alone for some time to come.

That evening the cook approached Mrs. Warren, and

lifting his finger, whispered in her ear, "Mees Varren, miladi. Lissen of w'at I say. Ze Kep stimmair! He vill come at Madeira to-morrow."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE CAPE STEAMER.

THE cook was a prophet who never lied. The Cape steamer anchored in the Funchal Roads the next morning.

All the visitors at the hotel who were to leave by it for England were desperately excited. For a week past they had been ready packed, and had not slept a wink, lest the steamer should come like a thief in the night, and go off before day-break, without taking them on board.

Some of them had lost weight through fright lest there should be no room in the vessel; for, when life stagnates at the hotel it is necessary to promote a *canard* or two respecting the Cape steamer; and a favorite one is that all the berths have been taken at the Cape a month ago.

At breakfast-time, however, there was the "Balmoral Castle" safely anchored in the roads waiting for the Portuguese "healthy" officer to go on board and inspect the bill of health.

"I told you the cook would be right, dear," said Mrs. Warren, who was all ready to start for the beach when Marian came down-stairs.

"But have you breakfasted?" was Marian's reply.

"An hour ago," said Mrs. Warren. "Now, here comes your coffee. You must make haste; your hammock is waiting outside."

"Don't you think Mr. Reade would rather you were there alone to receive him?"

"My dear child!"

"It is two whole months since you parted, remember. You had better meet him alone, and leave me to finish my breakfast. I will be ready for you in the garden when you have got over the worst of it."

"You are the most provokingly ridiculous child in Madeira!" said Mrs. Warren. "Eat your breakfast quickly and come with me. It would be most unkind to Gilbert if you stayed behind. Why, he may have been dreadfully seasick, poor fellow!"

"In that case I am *sure* he would not wish me to be present at his landing. But you said he was never seasick, Mrs. Warren."

"Well, then, he is homesick, or something. Now don't tease, but make haste with your breakfast and let us be off."

They got off in due time, and took their way through the steep streets, Marian swinging in her hammock, Mrs. Warren marching like a grenadier beside her.

The lazy little town always looked its best in the fresh morning sun, now pouring its white light on roof and balcony, kindling the dark pines on the mountain sides, and gilding the smooth, wide waters of the sea.

The people were all abroad in the streets; they had to move aside for *carros*, with the bullock-boys droning their "Ca, ca—ooa—ca para mi, boi!" They met prim little soldiers, like toy-men, jingling their spurs impressively; the fat friar of St. Francis on his round to collect provisions, which he pays for with his blessing; peasant-women in their eternal red and blue capes and necklaces; and the men in their white Turkish trousers; olive-skinned urchins flying light in the matter of clothing, and much in want of a Board School.

And the dreamy pleasure of the soft, seductive air, sweet as the air of the Hesperides, which steals into the senses and lulls but not oppresses; and the smell of flowers, and the glow of them, and their never-ending wealth, spreading along the walls and twining about the roots of trees, and creeping up the sides of houses and over the hanging balconies.

"Get on with you, my men," said Mrs. Warren to the hammock-bearers—who, however, are the only active people in the island. "Don't be afraid of leaving me behind; I can go quite as fast as you."

And the men grinned and pulled the tails of their foolish little caps, and set off at a pace which taxed the sinews as well as the dignity of Mrs. Warren.

"It would never do for us not to be there when he lands, would it?" she said to Marian.

"If he has been seasick perhaps he would rather land unobserved," replied the young lady.

"But he has *not* been seasick, dear. How can you say

such a thing! You know quite well that he is *never* sea-sick."

"Then we will get on as fast as you like, Mrs. Warren."

The beach was crowded, and very lively the beach was when passengers were to be landed from a steamer.

The quay is flanked at one end by the yellow house of the governor—the functionary with whom Mrs. Warren corresponded on sanitary subjects—from which a noble avenue of planes and sycamores leads up into the town; and at the other end by the shady Praça, and that old red fort peaked with pepper-box turrets, which one good push would send into the sea.

The beach and the bay were thronged with boats, green, red, yellow, and black, with a streak of white or orange at the top, and the keel rising as high as a man's head above the gunwale. In the offing you have the fine violet outlines of the Desertas.

The surf roars ceaselessly, but the roaring of the surf is nothing to the screaming of the boatmen and the drivers of the ox-teams. They scream against each other, and when it comes to screaming there is not a cent to choose between them.

The "healthy" officer had paid his visit to the steamer, inspected the bill of health and found it clean, and was returning to the shore in his gig.

Then the passengers began to scramble for the boats which swarmed around the vessel.

"Can you see him?" asked Mrs. Warren.

"No, I don't think I can; can you?"

"Is not that he?"

"Do you mean that man out there on the bowsprit?"

"No, dear, no; what should he be doing on the bowsprit? I mean the tall man leaning over the side. Oh, no; that's one of the sailors. Dear me! I hope he is there somewhere. Suppose he should not have come after all?"

"Perhaps they have forgotten to wake him, and he is still in his berth, and will be carried on to England!" said Marian.

"My dear, how can you! Oh, he is coming! Look, he is in the first boat! That is his back, I am sure; I should know Gilbert's back anywhere."

Certainly it was a very fine back—a strong one and a

straight one—and the head superbly set upon the shoulders. By and by he turned round to look at the shore, and then there was no doubt that it was Gilbert.

He saw the ladies, and lifted his hat, and a pleased smile spread itself slowly over his handsome, quiet features.

The boat grounded on the beach, and the ox-team dragged it over the pebbles to the landing-place. Gilbert made his way at once to Mrs. Warren and Marian, and his aunt held out both her hands and kissed him heartily.

"You dear boy, how glad I am to see you! And you look so big and brown and handsome, and I was afraid that you were not coming after all!"

"I could hardly get to shore before the boat, Aunt Susan."

"No, dear, of course not; but I couldn't even see you, and Marian said that perhaps you were still asleep in your berth."

"Did Miss Dean say that?" asked Gilbert, turning with twinkling eyes to Marian. "Come, now, I will be bold to say that I was up and dressed two hours before Miss Dean was awake."

"It is very possible," answered Marian, "for I had scarcely finished my breakfast when Mrs. Warren brought me down here."

"Aunt Susan," said Gilbert, "you ought not to have interrupted Miss Dean at her breakfast. Let us make haste back, that she may finish it."

"Mrs. Warren," said Marian, as Gilbert turned to give instructions about his luggage, "do not forget to remind me, if you please, that I owe Mr. Reade a grudge."

A few minutes later they were all returning to the hotel, Mrs. Warren with her hand on her nephew's arm, and Gilbert walking beside Marian's hammock.

"And now that we have got you," said Mrs. Warren, "how long do you mean to stay with us? But I shall settle that myself. I don't intend to let you sail away to one of the Poles next week, or the week after, you may be sure."

"No," replied Gilbert, "I shall do no more sailing. This is to be my last voyage. I made up my mind three days ago that I had played the Wandering Jew long enough. I am tired of it, and mean to vegetate at home for the rest of my days."

"I am very glad to hear it," said his aunt.

"Life has wearied you, Mr. Reade?" said Marian, in a lazy tone.

"On the contrary," he answered, quickly, and looking straight into her eyes as he spoke, "I am only just beginning to enjoy it."

CHAPTER XVII.

NOSSA SENHORA DO MONTE.

LATE in the evening, when all the house was abed, Gilbert strolled in the scented garden of the hotel, enjoying the air and a cigar.

It was a mere freak that had brought him back to Madeira, but gentlemen in the position ot Mr. Gilbert Reade can afford to indulge themselves in this fashion.

The common phrase "a man of the world" describes him better than some to whom it is applied. There were few countries of the world that he had not visited, and in most he had sojourned long enough to gain something more than a superficial notion of them and their peoples. In all his travels he had been the student not less than the man of business, and could chat to you in familiar style about any far-off interest in almost any quarter of the globe. He could furnish you with introductions in almost every capital of note. There was no sport of which he could not discourse with its votaries; no pleasure of New York, Vienna, or Constantinople which he had not seen—but as an outsider only.

He had never had a romance in his life; his temperament was not one that moved him to seek excitement in that form. "Adventures are to the adventurous." Romances are to the romantic.

A quiet man, keen, self-respecting, and endowed with a kind of genius for finding out the nature of things; yet there was no description of society, good, bad, or indifferent, in which he was not at home. This was the philosophy which made him such a hero to his aunt. All men pride themselves on their superior knowledge as compared with the other sex—though it is a species of pride which is becoming every day more liable to falls—but this was a man who did know.

Thrown very early on his own resources, he had amassed a fortune in the diamond-fields with a rapidity which was owing in part to good-fortune, but chiefly to his own extraordinary energy, fine judgment, and never-failing clearness and coolness of head. By the time the excitement, the love of the fierce adventurous life in those rough wild regions, had worn themselves out, he found himself a rich man, who might have set down in idleness for the remainder of his days. But he had cast his bread on other waters from time to time, when the mood took him, and he saw his opportunity; and it had always returned to him a hundred-fold. Latterly he had left the chief control of his affairs in the hands of a partner, and had been a globe-trotter for amusement and instruction. What he was in business, that he was also in his social existence. He could be good company without an effort, and he never appeared to exert himself in any situation. His genius and resource did not fail him in emergencies, whatever they might be.

Gilbert finished his cigar and went to bed, having been chiefly occupied during his stroll in asking himself what in the world had brought him to Madeira again.

The aspect of life changed for Mrs. Warren and Marian under the influence of this good-humored man of the world. He knew the island from end to end, what were the things to be seen and done, and the best and most agreeable modes of getting to all those places which no one can save his credit without visiting. He was always planning expeditions against the time when Marian should be ready for amusement on a serious scale.

The time drew nearer every day; for Marian, now that she had resolutely put problems in high mathematics behind her, quickly got back the strength and serenity she had lost during those foolish days; and the doctor said that if she continued to mend at this pace he would give her leave to discard her hammock for a saddle in a week or two. So Gilbert was always on the lookout for a proper lady's horse.

Then there was the villa to choose. Mrs. Warren had told her nephew on the morning after his arrival that it was her intention to take a quinta in the hills for Marian and herself. Gilbert had acquiesced—acquiescence was a

habit of his—and promised his assistance. But he did not approve of the quinta.

At the hotel they were altogether; his room was near theirs, they were under one roof. This was pleasant and convenient. Now if the ladies took their departure up the hills, and settled in a quinta (did I say that a villa was a quinta?) of their own, Gilbert could not very well accompany them. They would thus be separated by a distance of at least a mile, and a perpendicular mile. This would be unpleasant and inconvenient. Gilbert therefore openly acquiesced in the scheme, but secretly resolved that it must not be fulfilled.

"I think I know every suitable quinta in the place," said Gilbert. "I'm glad you have not yet made your choice."

"Thank you, dear," replied his aunt. "I knew you would be able to advise us."

So they climbed the hills, and prospected, in this direction and in that, but never a desirable villa could be found. Gilbert, in his capacity of guide and counselor, was satisfied with none of them.

This one was pretty enough, but not worth the money. That one, though admirable in every other respect, was not sufficiently accessible. A third was badly built, and another was too far from the town.

"Mr. Reade is very hard to please," observed Marian.

"You see, dear, he knows exactly what we want," replied Mrs. Warren.

They spent two days perambulating the hills, and did not discover Gilbert's ideal quinta.

"Have you thought about the mosquitoes?" asked Gilbert, in a casual tone when they were setting out on the third day's search.

"We think a great deal about them at night," said Marian.

"They are terrible in the hotel," said Mrs. Warren.

"They are worse in the hills," said Gilbert.

"If I thought that," observed Mrs. Warren, "I should be almost inclined to give up the quinta. What do you say, Marian?"

"The mosquitoes are not to be trifled with," replied Marian.

"It is impossible to trifle with them in the hills," said Gilbert.

"Do you know, dear, I almost believe we should act more prudently in staying at the hotel," said Mrs. Warren.

"And the getting up and down," said Gilbert; "have you thought about that?"

"Oh, that would be nothing at all," remarked Marian.

"I could not allow you to risk your life in a sled, dear," said Mrs. Warren, emphatically.

"We could use ponies," said Marian.

"You would have a man hanging on to the tail the whole way down," said Gilbert.

"I should not mind that, if the pony did not," answered Marian.

"But the man screams the whole time that he is hanging on to the tail," said Gilbert.

"He shall not scream," said Marian.

"He must scream," said Gilbert. "He is paid to scream."

"My dear," said Mrs. Warren, "Gilbert is right. We will not take a quinta. We shall do much better where we are."

So the villa was abandoned, and the man who knew his mind had his way. Mrs. Warren decided to remain in the hotel as long as they stayed in Madeira.

Marian had as yet done almost no sight-seeing whatever, and one evening while they were sitting in the veranda Gilbert said,

"You have not even seen the Mount Church, Miss Dean."

"I am quite ready to see it," she replied.

"Then we will go up there to-morrow," said Gilbert. "It is not worth the name of an excursion, but you really ought not to go anywhere else until you have been there."

"We will go up after breakfast," said Mrs. Warren. "I will have the hammocks round in good time, for I suppose if we are really to begin sight-seeing I shall have to take to one myself."

"I am afraid there is no help for it, Aunt Susan," answered Gilbert; "and I am certain you enjoyed your hammock yesterday."

"No, I didn't enjoy it a bit; it is the laziest way of traveling I know. But I am a very good, self-sacrificing woman, and I mean to appear as though I liked it very much."

"As virtue is its own reward, we will not applaud your resolution, Aunt Susan," said Gilbert.

"You shall have as much applause as you like from me, Mrs. Warren," said Marian.

"And you will applaud me, Miss Dean, if I also consign myself to a hammock?"

"That would be a very different matter," answered Marian. "But I hope you will do no such thing."

"I will go any fashion you please, Miss Dean."

"The peasants, when they are very devout, climb to the church on their hands and knees," said she.

"Well," answered Gilbert, "you shall make choice for me between gallantry and respect for my own church."

"Perhaps, on the whole, you had better ride on a quiet horse," said Marian.

Early the next morning they started on this miniature expedition, which was quite an event for Marian, who looked so charming as she came out of the hotel, in a soft loose dress and wrapper and wide straw hat with some newly gathered flowers as its only ornament, that her hammock-bearers blessed her on the spot. They were two handsome young fellows, lithe as leopards, and, in their white trousers and shirts open at the throat, made a very respectable escort for the comely English girl.

As for the hammocks, they did not in any way merit the censure of Mrs. Warren, for there is no pleasanter method of travel in existence. Just a trifle too luxurious, perhaps, or would be anywhere out of Madeira. Mrs. Warren had already begun to alter her opinion of these conveyances, but she would not allow it, and got in and out of her hammock two or three times before she could be persuaded to settle.

"There," said Gilbert, when she had at last allowed the bearers to lift her on their shoulders. "You look charming, Aunt Susan, and more entirely comfortable than I ever saw you before. By and by, when you have grown audacious, you will be as eager as Miss Dean for a sled."

Mrs. Warren merely closed her eyes and shuddered, and blindly motioned the men to go on.

The air blew soft and cool from the sea, carrying on its wings the scent of a hundred flowers. They grew with the luxuriance of weeds wherever the slenderest hold could be found—hoya, stephanotis, jasmine, scarlet hibiscus, alla-

mandas with their great yellow trumpets, orchids, and those wondrous roses with pale-colored petals closing round a blood-red heart.

Up slowly through the steep and winding streets, and then out of the town, and higher and always higher amongst the wooded hills, a paradise of ferns and tumbling waters.

Marian had some new exclamation of delight for every turn in the ascent; each fresh view they had of the bay beneath and the still or moving scenes around, above, and beyond them was lovelier than the last.

"Oh, that I should ever have abused Madeira!" exclaimed Marian. "What penance can I do for my sin?"

"The peasants when they are very devout," answered Gilbert, "climb to the church on their hands and knees."

"That is their affair," replied Marian.

"I'm told it has a very chastening effect if one wants a first-rate penance."

"No doubt. I felt sure you knew the nature of the penance, Mr. Reade, when you declined my suggestion."

"I shall forbid you two to talk to each other," said Mrs. Warren, "if you can not do so without sparring. Pray behave yourselves, for I want to be able to give the whole of my attention to these hammock-men. Gilbert, you have brought weapons with you, I hope?"

"How stupid of me!" exclaimed Gilbert, "to think I should have left my double-barreled gun, my revolver, and my bowie-knife at the hotel!"

"I am sure you ought to have a defensive arm of some sort, Gilbert. Look at my front bearer; he is continually feeling in his pocket. Could you not spring on him gently from behind and search him? I feel sure he is getting his knife in readiness."

"I think he is only counting his money," said Marian.

"Miss Dean is right, as she always is," rejoined Gilbert. "Your front bearer, Aunt Susan, has honesty written on every line of his face. I know him well. He has a wife and nine children; the confessor christened the youngest yesterday with ten names, including his own and those of the king, the governor, and the patron saint."

"I wish he would keep his hand out of his pocket," said Mrs. Warren.

The dry weather had preserved the road in excellent

condition, and in due time the stout bearers, none the worse for their climb, set our friends down at the church. Marian was out of her hammock in a twinkling; eager, animated, delighted; could not say enough in praise of anything; let Gilbert lead her here and there, from point to point; Mrs. Warren following, with an eye ever on the father of nine children, whom she suspected none the less that he had flung himself down in the shade with his cap over his eyes.

"I should not be surprised if he were meditating a spring," said Mrs. Warren to herself.

The church of Our Lady of the Mount—Nossa Senhora do Monte—crowns with solid grandeur a hill commanding the harbor, two thousand feet high. Its white towers are seen from every part of Funchal; its great black border is visible far out at sea.

Nossa Senhora is held in huge veneration by the islanders; they attribute an unusually fine crop of miracles to her.

"Let us go inside," said Marian, when they had taken good stock of the exterior.

"You had better remain without," said Gilbert. "The outside is the best of it."

"I wish to go inside," said Marian.

"Let us go inside, then," said Gilbert.

They went in. It was cool, and dim, and quiet, and a sound of soft music floated from one of the side chapels, where some celebration was in progress. But, as Gilbert had said, the outside was the best. The tawdry Virgin was unlovely, and one felt a sense of annoyance at the cheapness and poverty of the ornament.

They left the church, and went out into the sun again.

"I think they might make something better than that of their church," observed Marian.

"Our Ritualistic friends at home could give them a hint or two, I fancy," replied Gilbert.

"Gilbert," said Mrs. Warren, austerely, "I beg that you will not speak to me of the Ritualists."

"My dear aunt, I ask your pardon. I rarely even think of them."

"The church ought to have a legend," said Marian.

"It has many," said Gilbert.

"Can you not tell us one of them?"

"If it is anything preposterous, Gilbert, I think that,

for the credit of the poor people themselves, you ought not to relate it," observed Mrs. Warren.

"There is the miracle of the wheat-ship," said Gilbert. "It is preposterous or not, according to the point of view. The people take a just pride in it, as one of the most conspicuous of their Lady's performances."

"Tell us about the wheat-ship, please, Mr. Reade," said Marian.

"With Aunt Susan's leave, then, it is this: The island was threatened with famine—a worse famine than Pharaoh's—and they had no Joseph in Madeira. The people began to be very hungry, and did not know where to look for food. Then it occurred to some one to organize a general procession of the inhabitants, to repair to the Mount, and explain the situation to Nossa Senhora. This was done. The whole town came up here—"

"In hammocks?" asked Mrs. Warren.

"Oh, no, Aunt Susan, that would never have done. The Senhora would have mistaken her devotees for common tourists. No; they came up in a respectful manner on their hands and knees, and prostrated themselves at the altar."

"But they could not all have got into the church," said Marian.

"The observation is just, Miss Dean, and does honor to your mathematical attainments. They did not go in all at once; they went in detachments."

"And what was the result?" inquired Mrs. Warren.

"The next day a ship, heavy with wheat, arrived in the harbor; and the image of the Virgin in the church was found dripping with moisture. People with exceptionally good sight saw the Madonna swimming in advance of the ship, and towing her in with a cable. That is the miracle of the wheat-ship."

"It is entirely preposterous!" said Mrs. Warren.

"I think it is a most interesting legend," said Marian. "Why did the Madonna tow the ship with a cable?"

"I suppose there was no wind blowing," replied Gilbert.

"I think, Gilbert," remarked his aunt, "that lest you should be tempted to tell us any more legends of the place, we will go home. Marian has finished the sandwiches, and looks as though she would be quite ready for a proper meal at the hotel."

"Yes," said Marian; "I think more highly of seven o'clock dinner at this moment than I ever did before."

The escort wanted the party to return from the Mount in sleds. Marian, who would have screamed aloud at a sled three weeks ago, looked quite eager at this proposal, and declared herself ready. But Mrs. Warren would not hear of it.

"No, my dear," she insisted, "it is out of the question; I will not permit it. In a week or two, perhaps, when you have had more exercise and your nerves are stronger, you may try a sled."

So the hammocks were brought up again, and they descended slowly and easily to the town, through hedges of flowers, under spice-trees and palms, and by the edges of perilous precipices; but the feet of the hammock-bearers never stumbled.

Presently Marian glanced down toward where the old Loo Rock rose sheer out of the waters of the bay.

"One day I must go down to the sea and sketch the Loo," she said.

"You will need a protector, I am afraid," observed Gilbert.

"Why so?" she asked.

"The authorities are jealous of any one sketching their fortifications. They carried a friend of mine to the guard-house one day for sketching the Loo and its fortifications."

"In that case I must certainly go," said Marian.

"And I must certainly ask permission to accompany you."

"You think that they will take me to their guard-house? But, after all, I don't know whether the rock is worth sketching; what do you say, Mr. Reade?"

She liked to baffle him in this way; but did it so sweetly, and smiled so pleasantly in doing it, that one was almost gratified.

"Miss Dean is a very remarkable girl," said Gilbert, while he held his nightly converse with himself on the balcony outside his window. Then he asked himself, for the hundred-and-twentieth time, what had brought him to Madeira again. It was almost fitting that he found an answer to this question.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ROMANCE.

It was the middle of May. In London they had the "churlish chiding" of the east wind, and noses tending to blue. In Funchal the lizards basked and blinked in a tireless sun, the white walls of the town were warm to the touch, and flower and leaf were rocked in the golden ambient air.

A thing had happened which on the whole was inevitable. Gilbert had fallen in love with Marian.

He knew now what it was that had brought him back to Madeira. He also knew what it was that chained him there.

It had become his Calypso-realm, in which, like another Ulysses, he lay spell-bound. It had become his Eden, and Marian was its Eve.

He thought to keep his secret; and from Marian he seemed to keep it well enough. Not so well, however, from his aunt.

Mrs. Warren saw and was well satisfied. From what Marian had told her the night before Gilbert's arrival she had little doubt that the girl was heart-whole—at any rate, that Gilbert had no rival. An excellent prospect, therefore, at once presented itself to her mind. Marian should fall in love with Gilbert, as Gilbert had fallen in love with Marian. Nothing could be more entirely satisfactory. The good-hearted old lady loved both of them. From a lad up her nephew had been her hero. She had stood friend to him at a time when, turned adrift from his own home, he had no other friend in the world. She had seen of what sound stuff he was made, before he well knew it himself; and as he had never disappointed her hopes, so he had never forgotten his early debt to her. "As true as Gilbert" was a private maxim of hers, which she never spoke aloud.

Marian she had learned to love dearly, as in some measure we have seen. It had vexed her soul this month past to think that Marian should be hurrying to get well only that she might go back "to drudge at those abominable mathematics. "I declare to you, my dear, I have a tend-

ency to dyspepsia as often as I think of it," she said one day.

Now, then, if Marian would prove a sensible girl, and love Gilbert, problems in high mathematics might be consigned forthwith to the rather extensive limbo of things which Mrs. Warren held that no well-bred nice young lady should know anything about. For the present, however, she said nothing to anybody.

Gilbert in love with Marian, and priding himself that no one was the wiser; Mrs. Warren very much the wiser, but diligently keeping her counsel; Marian not a bit the wiser, and having therefore no counsel to keep: this was the situation.

This, however, was a sort of deadlock, and at the very outset. No drama can get along in this fashion.

Since Gilbert would not speak to Mrs. Warren, Mrs. Warren spoke to Gilbert. He was glad when she had done this, for he learned that he had a firm ally in his aunt.

"You were certain to be taken sooner or later, dear," she said, soothingly. "Only I was afraid it might be later."

"I am afraid it's late enough already," replied Gilbert.

"That remains to be seen," said Mrs. Warren.

Mrs. Warren was now set forth on a pursuit which was particularly congenial to her. She was by some means or other to grapple these two young people together with hooks of love.

She had had no great experience as a match-maker, but who in her situation is willing to be persuaded that experience is a necessary factor of success in these undertakings?

"My own opinion is that you were made for one another; and that being the case, it will be a pity if I can not bring you together," she said to her nephew, who replied in his quiet way that his aunt was more confident of success than he was.

"My dear boy," she replied, "you must be confident too. You were always confident in business, you know, and you always succeeded."

Gilbert smiled, but forbore to say that he did not think the analogy a perfect one.

Plot number two, with Marian as prospective victim, was now well afoot.

But another was visible on the surface. Gilbert did not wear his heart on his sleeve at any time: he hid it closer than ever now.

The days wore on, sunnily, lazily, charmingly. It was a part of the pleasure of their life in this serene retreat that it had no settled plan or order. Sometimes an expedition was arranged overnight; sometimes, without any definite object in view, they started out after breakfast and spent hours wandering slowly through flowering lanes, over soft sward paved with blossoms, along the edges of high cliffs with the deep blue sea beneath; resting as it pleased them under great tent-like trees, or in darkened glades, or at a rude bridge arching some narrow rushing stream. Turn where you will, some fresh loveliness unfolds itself, for the scene changes endlessly; kaleidoscopic in its variety of charm. Here it is soft and tender as the heart of England; here again, great, grand, and terrible, with tower on tower of rock, some of the highest cleft from summit to base by gorges of black and hideous depth, down which one might be falling, like Mulciber, "from noon to dewy eve."

Sometimes the day was idled in the ruddy garden of the hotel: Mrs. Warren, who was impatient of protracted rest in any situation, flitting continuously between the house and the grounds; Marian reclining in a wide wicker-chair; Gilbert outstretched on the grass beside her, in luxurious contentment.

On such a day as this the English post had arrived, and they were all occupied with their letters.

Mrs. Warren received a letter of domestic news from her parlor-maid every week, the reading of which was a lengthened process, provocative of various small ebullitions, for the maid wrote an original hand and spelled on principles of her own.

"Shall I try and make it out for you, Mrs. Warren?" asked Marian.

"You couldn't, dear; it is much worse than your mathematics, and it seems an interesting letter too. I'll go in-doors and get my magnifying-glass."

Gilbert, who kept his correspondence within the narrow-

est limits, had only two letters; one of them he read, the other lay unopened on the grass where he had thrown it.

Marian had finished the first reading of her letters from the lieutenant, and was beginning it again, when her eye fell on the sealed envelope at Gilbert's feet. She called his attention to it, for he had thrown himself back on the grass and seemed to have overlooked it.

"You have forgotten one of your letters, Mr. Reade," she said.

"That?" answered Gilbert, raising himself on his elbow and looking with a great lack of interest at the unopened epistle. "I mean to let that wait. It is business, and I have forsworn business for the present."

"But suppose it be a letter of extraordinary importance, containing something that requires immediate attention?"

"When you suggest that, Miss Dean, I am more than ever inclined to let it wait."

"But all the diamonds may have failed."

"More diamonds must be found."

"This is really inexcusable in so great a man of business, Mr. Reade."

"But I am not so great a man of business, I assure you, Miss Dean."

"Very well, I accept you at your own valuation. But if you don't intend to read your letter, I will read mine again."

This she proceeded to do, and Gilbert, after a moment's hesitation, picked up the rejected letter, opened it, and glanced over the contents. Then he threw it down again, with an exclamation of disgust.

"Was I a prophet?" inquired Marian, looking up from her own letter.

"N-no, not exactly," replied Gilbert.

"The diamonds have not failed?"

"Oh, no," he answered quickly; "nothing as interesting as that. But they tell me that I am wanted at the Cape again."

"Oh," said Marian, "I am sorry for that."

Gilbert looked uncommonly pleased at this, and very nearly blushed.

"I mean," added Marian, "that if you are going back to the Cape we can not have our expedition to Rabaçal; Mrs. Warren and I could never go alone."

"I don't know that I shall go to the Cape," said Gilbert. "At any rate I can't start for a week; so we shall have plenty of time for Rabaçal."

"I am glad of that," said Marian.

Perhaps the opportunity was a good one. For a moment Gilbert seemed to think it was; a look crossed his face, the corners of his mouth twitched, a half formed sentence rose to his lips. But he hesitated, and the chance was lost. He sat silent.

"I really must go and see if Mrs. Warren has made out her letter," said Marian, rising from her chair. "Shall I tell her that you are thinking of returning to the Cape, Mr. Reade?"

"I wish the Cape were submerged!" replied Gilbert, with unwonted energy.

"Oh!—and all the diamonds?"

"All the diamonds in the world—except one!"

"Is one so precious above the others, then?"

"There is one that is priceless!"

"You ought to be very precious of that one, Mr. Reade."

"So I should be, but unfortunately it is not in my possession."

"Ah, that is sad, is it not? But if you value it so highly, you will doubtless make an effort to secure it."

"It has seemed too far beyond me; but you have given me courage to try."

She laughed that so seeming innocent laugh of hers, and went on into the house.

CHAPTER XIX.

CABO GIRAO.

MARIAN, like Gilbert, had received two letters by that mail from England. Gilbert saw her read the first, but no one saw her read the second. Only Mrs. Warren knew that she had received it, for Marian had put it in her pocket at once, though with no effort at or desire of concealment. It was a letter from Arnold, the first he had been written her since she left England. Finding that Mrs. Warren, with the help of her magnifying-glass, had succeeded in deciphering the hieroglyphs of the parlor-maid, she went on to her own room to read Arnold's letter in quiet.

"What a little letter!" was her first exclamation when she had opened it.

Yes; it was a very little letter, but a very nice one; a brief, manly letter, containing scant intelligence about the writer, but full of solicitude for Marian; words of gladness of the good news of her returning health, which he had read in her letters to the lieutenant; thanks for the messages to him, and an entreaty that she would send him a letter, were it not more than a dozen lines, for himself. There was an earnest tone about this letter which might have held a deeper meaning than the mere words conveyed had Marian been seeking such a meaning; but she saw in it only a warmer expression than usual of the goodness and tenderness of heart which she had proved in Arnold in the days when they had played together as children.

But she liked that letter very much; reproached herself, as she put it away, that she had not written to Arnold before, and resolved that the next mail should not leave for England without carrying a letter from her to him.

This letter of Arnold's, I have said, had been seen by Mrs. Warren, who, indeed, had given it into Marian's hands. That evening, when Gilbert had gone for a stroll in the Praça, the ladies were sitting together at the open window, and the subject was lightly touched on between them.

"I have had a letter from Arnold," said Marian.

"I thought I recognized the writing, dear," replied Mrs. Warren.

"How did you do that, Mrs. Warren? He has not written to me here before."

"No, dear; but don't you remember that he wrote all our labels for us? It was I who got him to do that, you know. From the moment I heard he was connected with the law I said to myself, 'He shall write our luggage-labels.' It is most important to have them done in a perfectly *clear* and *unmistakable* hand. I once lost a valuable— But how is he, dear? I have lost so many things through labels having been carelessly written."

"He does not say much about himself," replied Marian; "indeed, I wish he said more, for I believe he is overworking himself at Mr. Trimble's."

"Ah, we must not let him do that. Write to him, dear,

and tell him about that shocking mathematical affair; it might serve as a warning."

"I shall certainly write to him, but I don't think I'll say anything about the problem, for, now that I remember, I promised him to have nothing to do with mathematics until I was quite strong again."

"You forgot that promise, I'm afraid, dear."

"Yes," said Marian, "I'm afraid I did."

"No message for me in the letter, I suppose, dear?"

"Oh, yes, Mrs. Warren; I ought to have given you that at once. He sends the nicest message of thanks to you for all the care you have taken of me."

"Very kind of him, dear, indeed. After that I must entreat you, for selfish reasons, to say nothing of the mathematics. And the rest of the letter is—?"

"The rest is all about me, Mrs. Warren."

"Ah; you found that part pleasant reading, dear, I hope?"

"I would rather there had been more about himself," she answered.

"He must remedy that when he writes again," Mrs. Warren said.

"I wish he had some good friends of his own in London," observed Marian. "I am quite certain he is often very lonely."

"Does he say anything about that?"

"Oh, no. It is the last thing in the world he would speak of."

"Is the letter—ahem!—is it a tender letter, dear?"

"It is a very kind one," laughed Marian.

"Of that I am sure, my love; but—hem!—is it a *tender* letter?"

"Not, I think, in the sense you mean, Mrs. Warren."

"Just so, dear."

Some further talk in a similar strain was interrupted by the return of Gilbert. Mrs. Warren, however, had received an impression.

Marian went up to bed shortly afterward, and Gilbert was left alone with his aunt. A conversation ensued which any one who had overheard would have found passionate on his part, anxiously affectionate on hers.

Mrs. Warren was constrained to say that she did not think Marian loved him.

"It would have surprised me more if you had said that you thought she did, Aunt Susan," he replied.

"I do not think," said Mrs. Warren, "that the child loves anybody."

"That, of course, is also possible," answered her nephew.

"She is the oddest child that ever was," went on Mrs. Warren, "with her notions about independence and the 'glory of earning your own living.' Sometimes, if she were not the dearest child in the world, I should have been more than half inclined to lose patience with her."

"I like that independence of hers," said Gilbert.

"Tut! Yes. Oh, well, perhaps, perhaps. She is a very dear girl, at all events. But, Gilbert, when I said I thought she did not love anybody I did not say that she might not love somebody."

"That I take to be highly problematical."

"Of problems, Gilbert, I have heard more than enough lately. Let them rest, if you please."

Mrs. Warren was a little nettled that she had not succeeded better in her nephew's behalf. For some days past she had played her part with unobtrusive assiduity, testing Marian's feelings by all the means at her disposal, throwing Marian and Gilbert together by such discreet devices as she could contrive, talking of him to her—in a word, doing everything short of telling her in downright phrase that he was hopelessly in love with her.

Marian had not shown herself in any degree moved; seemed, indeed, not to have had the smallest perception of the drift and significance of all these subtle suasions.

That she liked Gilbert was evident. She had smiles and pleasant talk for him, and could be earnest on occasion when they passed from chatter to something in more serious vein. But for the most part it was as though they avoided by common consent whatever bordered on the serious; their talk was a perpetual airy wrangle, with here and there an interlude; and with the weapon of banter she held him at arm's-length, and seemed always to say, "Thus far but no further."

Gilbert invited them to a picnic at Cabo Girão.

They had an early breakfast, and started immediately afterward. Mrs. Warren went in her hammock, which the father of nine children, unremitting in his efforts to win her favor, had lavishly decorated with flowers and grapes

and bunches of Indian corn. Marian and Gilbert were on horseback. Marian's mount was a little dark wiry mare, which Gilbert had hunted the town to procure for her. Wonderful animals for their work these small Madeira horses are; it strengthens one's respect for the whole equine race to see one of them climb or descend the side of an almost perpendicular mountain, over a road which would make the most supine member of a local British board of works blush an elegant purple. Coming down, they gather themselves together and leap from ledge to ledge in a fashion that exercises the rider considerably. But they never slip, for they are as sure-footed as the *burriqueiros* (mule-drivers, literally, though you scarcely see a mule in the island) who run screaming beside them.

Up through the hard-paved streets climbed and clattered our three friends, Mrs. Warren's bearers close behind the horses' heels. They passed hammocks slowly swinging on their long poles, and had glimpses of the pale-faced burdens within. Gilbert glanced an instant at one fair girl lying on her cushions, with a face as white as the lily her fingers clasped, then turned half round in his saddle and looked at Marian, whose eyes were light and sparkling, and her cheeks warm with the glow of health renewed.

"Is there something wrong with my dress?" asked Marian, for he had not often scrutinized her so boldly.

"Your dress is quite perfect," replied Gilbert. "I was thinking that when I saw you first you might have changed places with the girl who has just passed us."

"Did I look like that?" asked Marian, with a shudder.

"You were the image then of what she is now."

Marian made no answer, and they rode on in silence for awhile, until they had left the town behind them and passed on to a fine soft road with trees overhanging, where the horses asked in the plainest fashion to be allowed to show their speed.

"Are you for a gallop?" asked Gilbert, and her eyes sparkled consent, and in another moment they had left Mrs. Warren a quarter of a mile in the rear.

They galloped on a good half-mile, then drew bridle, and turned, and rode slowly back to meet Mrs. Warren.

"I thought you were running away," said that lady, with more complacence than might have been expected.

"From you, Mrs. Warren! I, at all events, am not base enough for that," said Marian.

"You may include me," said Gilbert. "We went, like Gilpin, because our horses would."

The good road came presently to an end, as all good roads in Madeira do. It ended basely enough at the bridge over the Ribiero dos Soccoridos, where Zargo's two companions were within an ace of drowning. From here you glance upward and feel the majesty of the mountains, and wonder whether the horses are really as good climbers as the *burriqueiros* declare.

"They had a noble river here once," said Gilbert, "until they cut down their pine forests overhead, and let it shrink to this torrent."

"I was just thinking there is a good deal of bridge for a very little river," observed Mrs. Warren. "Marian, my dear, do not let your horse paw in that extravagant manner; he looks as if he would step over the bridge."

They began now to climb a narrow rugged path, the mountains towering ever higher and sterner above them, and, ascending and descending by turns, came to the fishing-village of Camara dos Lobos, "Place of Seals," where the harbor was full of little gaudy boats loading and unloading. Here they halted for awhile to rest the men and horses, and took a turn in the cool dim market-place, whose shade was grateful.

In half an hour they began to climb again. It was tremendous work now, the path almost perpendicular, and diminishing in width at every step.

"Stop, Gilbert, stop!" called out Mrs. Warren. "I am quite certain we shall all roll backward if we attempt to go on."

"This is nothing, Aunt Susan; we are only just beginning the ascent," answered Gilbert, from the front, keeping half an eye on his own horse, and an eye and a half on Marian's.

"Then I shall go back at once," cried Mrs. Warren. "Tell the men to turn about, Gilbert."

"It is easier up than down, I assure you, Aunt Susan; besides, you will lose your luncheon."

"To think," murmured Mrs. Warren, as she lay back in her hammock and prepared herself for the worst, "that

my own nephew should ask me to risk my life for a little cold roast fowl—the liver wing is all I ever touch."

But there was really no danger. The horses, though they had dropped their curveting, went as surely and almost as lightly as they had done on the level road, and the hammock-bearers would have scorned a slip.

Presently the path became so narrow that the riders had to dismount. At this height the vegetation began to change, put off its tropical character, and take on an appearance which Marian said reminded her of Scotland.

"You make me almost weep, child," exclaimed Mrs. Warren. "I had a Scotch cook for eleven years. To think I should be reminded of her in a place like this!"

They were now amongst the fir-trees, broom, and pines; the air was crisp and sweet, but growing keener. Gilbert unfolded a shawl which he had had strapped on his saddle, and placed it about Marian's shoulders.

"Thank you," she said. "I do believe I wanted it. See what it is to be in the care of an experienced traveler."

"I will be shabby enough to remind you that you scorned the notion of a wrap when we set out," he answered.

"Yes, but you see I am *not* an experienced traveler. On a question of wraps I promise to trust you in the future."

Shaking themselves free of a horde of beggars, who rushed on them from a group of mountain-huts, our travelers entered the shades of a pine forest, rounded a grand headland, and reached at length the threshing-floor of Cabo Girão, where they were to lunch.

Gilbert, who knew to a nicety how these matters should be ordered, had sent his men in advance; and on the verdant edge of the cliff, under a tent of massy leafage, luncheon was laid on a snow-white cloth. The men had disappeared, and it looked as though the cloth and its contents had been let down, like the apostles, out of the skies.

"Forgive me, Gilbert," said Mrs. Warren, with emotion, as her glance fell on her favorite pastry, "that I should for one moment have doubted your guardianship."

"You are not the first who has doubted it, Aunt Susan."

"Or been agreeably disappointed in the end, I am sure, dear Gilbert."

"My dear aunt, you overwhelm me. But this is Grandisonian. Miss Dean is waiting to begin."

There were tiny terraced corn-fields about them, and pine-clad hills above, and the blue Atlantic waste beneath.

They lunched, and Mrs. Warren placed her handkerchief over her head and slept like a stone-pine.

"Come," said Gilbert to Marian, "and I will show you the finest view in the world."

He led her but a few yards to the brink of a headland, which rose, a sheer basaltic wall, two thousand feet out of the sea. Moses on the height of Pisgah saw no such sight as this! Marian held her breath, and gazed with silent, wide-eyed wonder. Sky, air, and sea—no more than these: but what a miracle of light, and sound, and odor; of never-ending waters, cloven by the sun, and widening outward and onward till they met and mingled with the sky!

"Oh, it was good of you to bring me here!" said Marian, at length, with a voice that came out of her heart.

"I wanted to give you one sight to remember," he answered.

"You have done it," she said, "for this one will be a part of my memory all my life long."

"I wonder whether, for a tenth of that time, you will remember who brought you here?"

"Yes," she said, quietly, "I think I shall remember that too."

Oh, Gilbert Reade, what are you about that you dally with this golden chance? Do not all things accord? Has she ever looked on you with eyes so soft before? Is not the air that wraps you both around tingling with very love? Was it not, think you, 'neath a sky like this that Adam wooed and won his Eve in Paradise?

But he lets it go, for in very truth he fears lest, on the threshold of his Eden, another word of his may shut the door upon him.

They turned from the headland and went back to Mrs. Warren, sleeping now like a forest. But something, no doubt, informed her dreams that, so far as Gilbert was concerned, it was no use sleeping any longer; and, practical even in the realms of Nod, she awoke almost immediately.

The afternoon was wearing on, and Gilbert called up the men, and they began their descent to Funchal. It had seemed steep enough coming up, but going down was like

descending a church-steeple. Marian, who was in the gayest spirits, thought it capital fun—whence, of course, Gilbert thought it capital fun also; but one of the party scarcely drew breath until level ground was touched again.

The night breeze was blowing from the sea when they reached the hotel in time for dinner.

"Has—has anything transpired?" Mrs. Warren inquired of her nephew later in the evening.

"Nothing," replied Gilbert.

"Then I am very seriously annoyed!" returned his aunt. "I deliberately went to sleep on the top of a windy rock in order that you might behave as—as any other man in those circumstances would have done. My only reward will be an attack of rheumatism. I have a great mind to take Marian back to England by the next boat."

Gilbert had some ado to mollify his aunt, who, of course, had reason on her side. Doubt had made him play the laggard as he had never done before. But if he faltered longer his case was hopeless, for should he return to the Cape he must sail in three days.

CHAPTER XX.

RABAÇAL—AND AFTER.

"THE cook says we can not possibly go to Rabaçal and back in a day," urged Mrs. Warren.

"This cook knows too much," answered Gilbert. "He must be refuted. Miss Dean, can you make a very early start?"

"Yes; if my breakfast is guaranteed."

"I will be responsible for that myself. Aunt Susan, can you breakfast at five o'clock?"

"At least I can eat something and call it breakfast," replied Mrs. Warren.

"It is all I ask," said her nephew. "I will make our arrangements at once. A friend of mine, who has been cruising in his yacht amongst the Azores, landed here yesterday. He is going up the Gran Corral to-day, and will lend his yacht to take us as far as Calheta."

"Have you noticed anything unusual about Gilbert the last day or two, dear?" said Mrs. Warren to Marian, when Gilbert had gone down to the shore.

"I think his appetite has increased," replied Marian. "He was longer over dinner than any one else last night."

"I did not mean that, Marian. Indeed, I have fancied his appetite was falling off. He seems to me to have something on his mind."

"There is some very expensive diamond that he wants to buy, I think," said Marian. "Perhaps that may be troubling him."

"Indeed; I don't remember to have heard about that."

"Has he not told you, Mrs. Warren? I understood him that it was almost impossible to get it, but he meant to try."

"Oh!" said Mrs. Warren, in an altered tone, and with a smile. "Yes, yes, to be sure; I think I know the diamond Gilbert means."

"I hope he may get it, if it is of so much importance to him," said Marian.

"I am sure it would encourage him greatly if you would tell him that, dear," observed Mrs. Warren.

Soon after five the next morning they left the hotel and went down to the shore, where the steam-yacht was waiting that was to take them to Calheta on the way to Rabaçal.

This was Marian's first excursion by water, and delicious the sensation was, in the cool clear air of the morning, with the still blue sea around and the painted cliffs above. They passed Camara dos Lobos, where they had halted on the road to Cabo Girão two days before, then Cabo Girão itself, and on till they reached the lovely little bay of Calheta. A native boat took them ashore on the crest of a big wave, and the men whom Gilbert had brought on from Funchal got their hammocks into readiness at once.

"Are you for a hammock too?" asked Marian of Gilbert.

"With apologies—yes. But it is necessary to-day. I hoped, however, to slink into it unobserved."

"I will show you how to get in if you like," said she.

"Thank you; but it would please me better to be allowed to help you;" which he did.

It was now only a little after eight o'clock, and the young, fresh glory of the day was like a veil about them as they rose into the mountain air. The sea shone beneath them, until, as they were carried higher and further inland, it began to leave their sight; and then, as they looked upward, it seemed that a white company of the clouds swept

slowly down to meet them. The clouds touched them by and by, and in this strange company they crossed a wide dark moor, peopled only by the locusts and the centipedes.

Presently Marian, who had been lying back in her hammock, looking up with idle satisfaction at the great grim rampart of the mountains, uttered a cry of surprise, as the bearers stopped short before the black mouth of a cavern. Ferns bearded it all round, but it was forbidding as a tomb.

"We are not going in there!" exclaimed Mrs. Warren, for one or two of the men were preparing to light torches of twigs smeared with some pitchy matter.

"It is this or nothing," laughed Gilbert. "What do you say to it, Miss Dean?"

"I would not escape it for the world," said Marian. "*Please*, Mrs. Warren, don't cry back; it looks so deliciously dark inside."

"We shall not emerge alive; of that I am certain," said Mrs. Warren. "Really, if I had had any idea Madeira was like this I would have gone to Torquay. Ugh! We are positively going in. Keep close to me, Gilbert, if you please. You will oblige me by letting the men know that my brooch is only imitation."

It was like entering a circle of Dante's Inferno. A few yards from the entrance the cavern—it was only a mountain tunnel, though, and not a cavern at all—grew inky black, and the torches of the guides were like red patches on a pall.

"Let us stop and have a ghost story," began Marian, but an inarticulate wail which issued from the throat of Mrs. Warren brought her to a sympathetic pause.

Just when the darkness seemed Egyptian a spot of white light showed in the distance, and in a moment or two their eyes were dazzled as the bearers carried them out of the tunnel into the full blaze of the sun, which fell on clinging moss and trailing fern and silvered the edges of myriad stony peaks. It was as abrupt as the passage in fairy-tale from the magician's den to the palace of the fairy queen. Mists white and gray rolled up from the valley far beneath and hid the mountains as they passed.

Marian drew a long breath, and turned to Gilbert and said:

"This will be one other memory."

"This is Rabaçal," said he. "Will you go further? I have more to show you yet."

"You are our guide; we are in your hands," she answered.

But Mrs. Warren had still to recover from the tunnel, and said she thought they had gone far enough.

"There is an ideal place for luncheon a little further on," Gilbert said. "You will be well out of sight of the tunnel there, Aunt Susan; come along, come along."

And Mrs. Warren, who said she had no objection to be out of sight of the tunnel, allowed herself to be persuaded, and the bearers moved on again.

They were carried now along a sharp steep path, hardly a span across, with trees of the lily of the valley beside them, and new loveliness of hue and form disclosed at every step. Presently Gilbert ordered a halt, and they sat down and eat like a party rescued from famine. Then Mrs. Warren gathered her cloak about her, for there was a nipping and an eager air up here, and said she would go no further.

"Very well, Aunt Susan," said Gilbert; "but we have not exhausted the neighborhood."

"You have exhausted my energies, though. If Marian likes to go a little further she may; but I think it will soon be time for us to return."

"What do you say, Miss Dean? Are your energies exhausted?"

"Not in the least; but we must not overdo our bearers."

At this, the handsomest of Marian's hammock-men arose, and twirled his cap in his fingers, and smiled with all his features, and bent himself backward and forward, and this way and that, and called his father and his mother, and the King of Portugal, and all his children, and his patron saint to witness that he was ready to scale the clouds with Marian on his shoulders.

"We can not in decency refuse to use up a little of this energy," said Marian, when she had thanked her bearer becomingly.

"Then if you will go with me I will show you the Twenty-five Fountains," said Gilbert; and off they went, leaving Mrs. Warren comfortably bestowed with the father of nine children, to whom she had recently become reconciled, standing over her like a sentry.

Marian and Gilbert in their hammocks went down, down, down a narrow broken path with daphne and laurel

and lily and feather-like fern hiding the sheer wall of the precipice, over which one false step would have cast them. There had been heavy rain the day before, and in some places, where the road had been completely washed away, the bearers waded knee-deep in crystal water.

"Are you afraid?" called out Gilbert.

"Not a bit. It would be almost a privilege to be killed in a place like this."

By and by they reached a scrap of a stone bridge, a few inches wide, and stood in the center of foaming waters which poured from the rocks above and leaped and hissed along a narrow tortuous bed. Jet after jet they counted, rising, sparkling, and scattering spray like diamond dust into the air.

These were the Twenty-five Fountains, and here they got down from the hammocks and left the bearers to rest awhile, and Gilbert said that Marian must come a step or two further and see the Cave of the Fairies.

It rose dark and silent by the edge of a deep pool, garlanded and roofed with fern.

"Will you stay here and be queen to the fairies?" asked Gilbert, presently.

"They would depose me in a week," she answered, laughing.

"Not if I were their prime minister," said Gilbert.

"You? Oh, you would be the first to lead revolt, I think."

"Against you?"

"Against me."

"No; I would be your trusty counselor. You and I would make wise laws for the people, and they should be written in your name, and they would call you the great and good queen, and bring you offerings in lily cups and a fresh crown of fern-leaf every day."

"What would you do with the very old and ugly fairies?"

"We would set the young ones to build mansions for them and tell them stories."

"And with the very young and pretty ones?"

"They would take care of themselves. But there would be no young and pretty ones for me while you sat queen."

"That is very polite; but it is not like you to turn flatterer."

"I do not flatter; I speak the soberest truth."

"Then I think it is time for us to go back to Mrs. Warren," she said, flushing slightly as she rose.

"Will you go and not hear me? You can not be offended, Marian, if you will believe how truly I speak. I have waited to say this—to say that I love you—waited and feared, not daring to speak; but loving you the stronger for my silence. I do not ask you to say that you love me, Marian—"

"I could not say that," she interrupted, gently but decisively.

"No, you can not say that. I knew you would not," he answered, and his voice trembled a little. "But will you not say that I may love you?"

"How can I let you love me if I do not love you?"

"You will deny me that too, Marian?"

"Yes; you must speak no more of this, please. I do not know whether I am to blame for what you have said to me; if I have spoken a word or done anything to lead you to think—to think what is quite impossible, I am sorry; very, very sorry."

"You are good," he answered, gently, "and very kind. No; I alone am to blame. There has not been, and could not be, a fault with you."

"I am sorry; so sorry," she said, and put her hand into his, and there were tears in her eyes as she looked at him.

"Yet you deny me everything. Oh! Marian, not everything. Let me love you, and I will make you to love me."

"I can not, I dare not, I have not the right, I—oh, let us go back to Mrs. Warren, please. Why did I let you bring me here?"

"Is there any other that you love? You will let me ask you that, Marian?"

"I love no one well enough to be his wife," she answered.

"And you will not try to love one well enough?"

"I can not, I can not. Spare me this, please. I have no thought of marriage, no wish to marry. Mine is to be a student's life."

As she spoke she moved slowly forward; and Gilbert, who was very pale and quiet, was left standing at the entrance to the cave.

When she became aware that he did not follow, she turned and went back to him, and once more put her hand in his.

"Come," she said, with a rather sad smile, "we must go together. Are you still my friend?"

"What need you ask? Your friend before, your friend now, your friend ever."

She thanked him rather with her eyes than with her lips, and let him detain for an instant's closer grasp the hand she had laid in his. Then they went on together to where their hammock-bearers basked in the sun, and were carried back to Mrs. Warren.

That acute lady perceived at a glance that the plot had miscarried. She groaned inwardly, but preserved a smiling exterior; and, with hypocrisy branded on their faces, they set out on their journey home. It was well for the sake of appearances that their mode of progress along the high shelving paths imposed no necessity of conversation, and by the time they reached the yacht at Calheta Gilbert had regained sufficient command of himself to be able to talk with forced animation to Marian as well as to his aunt.

Arrived at the hotel, Mrs. Warren dismissed Gilbert dexterously, and he appeard no more that night.

Marian was flushed, and her manner betrayed nervousness, but she persuaded herself that she had hidden everything from Mrs. Warren. Mrs. Warren, to support her in this belief and lull any suspicions she might have respecting her own complicity, preserved an unbroken and seemingly unobservant cheerfulness, and talked continuously on matters indifferent. Marian, on her part, as often as she was able to put in a word, spoke of returning home as quickly as possible; declared she was perfectly well, and must waste no more time in idleness. She even began to collect her books, with a view to packing them the next day. Mrs. Warren laughed and pretended to encourage her, declaring that she also was ready to return to England at any moment.

But after they had said good-night, and Marian had gone to her room, Mrs. Warren took occasion to pay her a momentary visit there, and said, in a casual tone, as she was going out again:

"Gilbert has just told me, dear, that he must return to the Cape to-morrow."

CHAPTER XXI.

MR. TRIMBLE RESOLVES HIMSELF.

"RUPERT," said Mrs. Trimble at the breakfast-table one morning, "it is a long while since we have seen anything of young Mr. Lee."

"A long while, Maria, eh?" responded her husband, preparing to cut his "Times."

"Yes; it was only yesterday that Ethel put the question to me, 'Mamma, how long is it since Mr. Lee dined with us?' and I really could not answer her. It must be months at the very least. I think, Rupert, that you ought to ask him to dinner."

"Hum! Dinner? I don't feel so sure that I ought, Maria. Dear me! what a prodigious list of bankrupts: it's time we had a change of government."

"What do you mean, dear, by saying that you don't feel sure you ought to ask Mr. Lee?" said Mrs. Trimble. "You know how delighted you have always been with him since poor Mr. Jones turned out so badly."

"Well, now, Maria," answered Mr. Trimble, "I am not certain that Jones *will* turn out so badly. I say I am not at all certain about that, Maria. A matter did happen which gave me a most unfavorable opinion of him at one time; and even now Jones is not all that I could wish. But there is a frankness and an openness about Jones that gives me more confidence in him than I've been able lately to feel in Lee. Lee is a perpetual mystery. He's nothing short of that. A perpetual mystery. That's what Lee is, Maria."

Mr. Trimble spoke rather more testily than he was in the habit of doing to his wife. It required very little nowadays to put him out of temper whenever he thought or spoke of Arnold.

"You surprise me a good deal, dear," said Mrs. Trimble. "I am glad indeed that Mr. Jones is restoring himself to favor; for you may remember, Rupert, that he was a kind of *protégé* of mine. But I thought Mr. Lee had always given you complete satisfaction. You never used to speak of him except to praise him; and you have told me

often that you thought him one of the cleverest young men you ever saw."

"My present opinion is, Maria, that he is a little too clever."

"Oh, my dear—pooh! too much cleverness is impossible in your profession, you know. Perhaps you don't give him quite enough encouragement. He always seemed to me rather a sensitive young man. Or you may have been overworking him a little. You know, my dear, you work so hard yourself that you may be inclined to look for a little too much from the clerks."

"Well, my dear, whether I look for it or not, I don't get it. The rascals are very well able to look after themselves. The standard of work amongst clerks in our profession is not what it was when I was young. As for Lee, well, the truth is, Lee is too deep. I tell you, Maria, that Lee is much too deep."

"Why, Rupert, what dreadful thing has the poor boy been doing?"

"Well," replied Mr. Trimble, a little awkwardly, "that's just what I don't know, and can't find out. But I know he's been doing something. I am afraid he is mixing with a bad set. His money goes in unaccountable ways; and he is driven to do various unprofessional things to make a second income. He writes for newspapers, I am told; and when a young man takes to that, you never can be sure of him. You can't trust him with professional secrets either. No, Maria, no; I must say that since I improved Lee's standing in the office he has disappointed me considerably."

Mrs. Trimble, however, was not yet convinced. She felt sure, she said, that Arnold had been misunderstood, and still thought that the best thing was to give him some pleasanter companionship than musty papers in the evening.

Mr. Trimble heard this as the last word before he set out for the City. His private opinion was that the best thing he could do would be to get rid altogether of such an exceedingly doubtful young man; but he did not say this to Mrs. Trimble.

A brief and rather singular colloquy took place between the solicitor and his manager that morning: Mr. Trimble,

suspicious, irritated, ungracious; Arnold, unsuspecting, vexed, and troubled.

"Er—ugh—er—I don't think, Lee, that—er—ugh—you have been doing your work as you should do lately; but—ugh—um—come and dine with us to-night—ugh."

Arnold received this uncordial invitation in the manner that might have been expected of him. It was like the flinging of a bone to a dog, and he rejected it with some amount of indignation.

"I think, Mr. Trimble," said he—and he looked rather red as he said it—"that until we understand each other better I ought not to accept your hospitality."

"Then you refuse, Lee? Well, I was almost prepared for it. There's a matter here," he went on, turning at once to business—"but perhaps you had better ask Mr. Jones to step in."

Arnold now began to find himself losing authority. Mr. Jones, on the other hand, diligently whetting his tongue against the manager, found his task easier than before.

The other clerks, lynx-eyed in such a matter as this, had seen for some time past that all was not as well with Arnold as it had been. He no longer lived in the high favor of the chief. Mr. Jones was oftener in the inner room than the manager, whom, in fact, he seemed steadily to be superseding. He dropped an occasional word in the hearing of his fellow-clerks to the effect that "probably Lee wouldn't be kept much longer," and himself assumed the air of a gentleman whose fortunes might be expected shortly to mend. Indeed, he said, with a covert smile, that "Trim was getting his eyes opened at length, and beginning to repent of having put the younger in the place of the elder." "You see," he said to the junior clerk, on another occasion, "a man may do well enough on the stool of a clerk, who isn't worth a rap in the manager's chair." And the juniors, seeing which way the wind blew, began forthwith to transfer their allegiance from Arnold to Jones.

A mystery hung about Arnold which defied all attempts at penetration. He had been growing shabby and shabbier in his dress—he whom a degree of nicety in this respect (which came a long way short of dandyism) had always characterized.

One day the office-boy returned from his dinner bursting with news. He had seen the manager taking his lunch at

the cheap vegetarian restaurant in Holborn which he himself patronized, where meals—filling at the price—are to be had for sixpence. Now, it was well known that Arnold had received a considerable addition to his salary at the beginning of the year. He was known also for a man of moderate and frugal ways. How had it come about that, with a larger salary, he was living in barely respectable style, shunning his friends, and getting more and more out of favor with his chief? How had he lost caste and standing so rapidly? What did he do with his money?

On this latter point Mr. Jones was no better informed than the rest, but what he did know was that his scheme to supplant Arnold in Mr. Trimble's favor was getting on mightily.

Mr. Jones had been clear from the first both as to what he intended to do and how best it might be done. He was perfectly frank with himself—good-humored even—about it.

Here was a young upstart who, entering the office years later than he had done, had on a sudden, and, as Mr. Jones reasoned, out of no merit of his own, been promoted to the place which it had long been Mr. Jones's ambition to win.

Trimble had been infatuated, and Arnold was a sly dog. This was Mr. Jones's explanation of Arnold's rise. But Trimble must be made to rid himself of his infatuation, and the sly dog must be bested. It was an enterprise quite after Mr. Jones's heart, and the knowledge of his principal which he had gained by one or two mishaps in the past had taught him the lines on which it was safest to proceed.

Arnold had discovered long since that Jones was intriguing to supplant him, but he kept his counsel. He was too proud to speak of what he knew, but he could hardly help showing it by other means, and he contrived in this way and that to set up a barrier between himself and Jones. He held no further communication with him than the business of the office required, and refused so pointedly to have anything to do with him after office hours that Jones ceased his advances and fell back.

Mr. Jones had never forgotten a peccadillo in which he was once discovered. He knew there was no chance of entrapping Arnold in that way, but it occurred to him that another visit to Arnold's chambers might lead to something.

Accordingly he went there one evening, and met Mrs. Fagan at the foot of the stairs.

"My good woman," began Mr. Jones in his pleasantest tone, for he made use of everybody, "I think that Mr. Lee lives somewhere in this building. Yours," continued Mr. Jones, indicating with a slight motion of his hand the bucket Mrs. Fagan carried on her arm—"yours is a useful calling."

"Troth, 'tis a tankless one, your honor," returned Mrs. Fagan.

"Don't say that, I beg of you. Who could be wanting in gratitude to one of your profession? You are mothers to the young men who reside in these desolate chambers."

"Faix, we are that same, surr; but there's ne'er a one of 'em will say it."

"The more shame for them, Mrs. —— Mrs.——"

"Fagan, your honor. Loosy Fagan."

"To be sure; I might have known it. And does Mr. Lee live here, Mrs. Fagan?"

"He did, surr, but he's out av it this good while."

"Gone away?"

"Joost that, surr."

"Dear me! Gone away? And where has he gone to, my good Mrs. Fagan?"

Now Mrs. Fagan did not know where Arnold had migrated, but Mr. Jones in putting his question looked at her with a generous eye and rattled some loose coins in his pocket.

"'Tis this way, ave ye plase, surr," said the wide-awake char-woman. "Misther Lee was sthrict wid me that I wudden brathe a whisper to a livin' sowl."

Arnold, it need scarcely be said, had laid no such injunction upon her; had not, in fact, taken Mrs. Fagan into his confidence at all on the subject of his departure.

But Mr. Jones swallowed the statement, and went on rattling the coins in his pocket, with intent to separate the smallest of them for use in case of need.

"Ah," he said, "Lee had no doubt had some little difference with a creditor; that was why he pledged you to secrecy, Mrs. Fagan. But *I* am his friend. He would be hurt beyond measure if he thought you had withheld his address from me. Indeed, I think he would be almost angry, if any one could be angry with you, Mrs. Fagan."

"'Tis yer honor has the swate tongue, an' no mistake," said Lucy. "Av they was all like yer honor it's a blessed life I'd be ladin' instid o' frettin' the heart out av me wid thryin' to plaze thim."

But further than this Mrs. Fagan did not vouchsafe, for Mr. Jones showed himself in no hurry to bribe her. Mr. Jones, in fact, saw that the char-woman was likely to prove his match.

"Take this, Mrs. Fagan, and purchase some little relish for your tea," he said, and produced a fourpenny-piece. "No, no, don't look at it," for Mrs. Fagan, in truth, was about to test the coin with her teeth, after eying it with no great kindness.

"'Tis too much ye have given me, surr, and that's the truth," said she.

"And where did you say Mr. Lee had moved to, Mrs. Fagan?" asked Mr. Jones, deprecating her words with a modest inclination of the head

"Indeed, surr, I couldn't tell ye that same av I thried," replied Mrs Fagan, pocketing the coin.

"Do you mean that you don't know?"

"'Tis joost what I do mane, yer honor."

Mr. Jones's expression showed that he was conscious of defeat, and that he did not take it equably; and Mrs. Fagan, with an eye to the other fourpences in the future, made haste to pacify him.

"But don't be bodderin' yersel' about that, surr," said she, "for I'll get the place for ye, widout a doubt. An' see here, I think that's Misther Bell comin' under th' archway, that lived wid him. 'Tis he that can tell ye better nor me."

The poet, airy and blithe as ever, came up in time to hear himself described by Mrs. Fagan in an under-tone as "an evil-disposed young vagabone that kept all hours and was that disarderly in his habits as never was."

"Lucy, my treasure, I salute you!" exclaimed Bell, coming up as Mrs. Fagan finished her eulogium, and tipping her bonnet over her eyes. "Now run, or I'll search your pockets."

And Mrs. Fagan, muttering inverted blessings, did retire with some alacrity; for her pockets, which were nearly as deep as her intellect, contained some very decent pickings. Greetings of a rather cool description passed between

Bell and Mr. Jones; for Dick knew that Arnold had no great regard for his fellow-clerk.

"I called to see Lee, Mr. Bell," said Jones.

"Ah! sorry you can't have the pleasure. Didn't he tell you he had left here?"

"N-no; oddly enough he didn't."

"Odd, as you say," answered Bell; and added, *sotto voce*, "he doesn't want *you* squinting about with those cat's eyes of yours, that's evident."

"You can—ah—you can give me his address, I suppose?" insinuated Mr. Jones.

"Can't—'pon my honor," responded Dick. "But what's the need? You work in the same shop. He'll tell you himself if you ask him."

Dick knew as well as Mr. Jones did that he wouldn't, but that was no affair of his.

"Of course I can get it from Lee to-morrow; but I happened to be rather anxious to see him this evening," said Mr. Jones, making a last effort.

"Ah, you wouldn't find him in this evening, I fancy; so you see it would have to keep till to-morrow in any case. Sorry you should be disappointed, Mr.—Mr. Jones. Good-night to you;" and the poet took his way up the stairs.

"Lost fourpence, and had some sauce out of young good-for-nothing there," was Mr. Jones's comment on this adventure, as he quitted the Inn and went in search of billiards.

But he was quick to reflect that his mission had not been altogether fruitless. He had learned that Arnold had left his chambers, and with something of secrecy, as it appeared; which were facts worth knowing. Should the need arise, Mr. Jones did not doubt his ability to discover his young friend's whereabouts.

Very soon after this he had another opportunity with his principal. Arnold had been sent out of town for a day to attend that excellent but tempestuous client, Admiral Græme. In the afternoon his friend McCallum, the editor of the "Woolsack," called at the office to see him, on "urrgent literrary beesness." McCallum was not a presentable man in the conventional sense of the term. An excellent journalist, but in appearance and attire a relic of the days when gentlemen of the press sent one collar per

week to the wash, and seldom went there oftener themselves.

Mr. McCallum repelled in very cavalier style the inquisitive advances of Mr. Jones; declined with emphatic pshaws, hoots, and gammons to state his business; and went off in a fine Scotch tantrum, declaring that he would scarify the firm in the next issue of his paper. Mr. McCallum did not speak in whispers, and Mr. Trimble in his sanctum caught a word or two of his anathema.

"Who was that gentleman, pray?" he inquired of Mr. Jones.

"That gentleman? Well, no, that person, sir, is a friend of Mr. Lee's."

"Indeed! And what does he come here for?"

"He appears to be connected with the newspaper trade, sir. He came to see Mr. Lee."

"Indeed! What were the last words that he used? I think my ears must have deceived me."

"He said, sir, that he would scarify us in the next number of his paper."

"Scarify! A singular expression."

"Yes, sir; it was not the only rude expression that he used. A person of extremely rough manners. I gathered from what he said that Mr. Lee writes for his paper."

"What is the periodical called?"

"I think the 'Woolsack' was the name he mentioned, sir."

"I have never heard of the periodical."

"Nor I, sir."

"It can scarcely be a reputable print."

"I should think not, sir."

"And what was the gentleman's business with Mr. Lee?"

"He would not state it, sir; but seemed determined to see Mr. Lee, here or elsewhere. Well, as a matter of fact, I don't even know where Mr. Lee lives, so how could I tell him?"

"Don't know, Jones! Come, come! You know very well that his chambers are in Staple Inn."

"Oh no, sir; he has left there. I called at Staple Inn about a week ago. The rather dissipated young man he shared the rooms with is still there, and I saw him. I also saw the extremely dissolute woman who professes to do charing in those chambers. They refused me all informa-

tion, and jeered at me. As there seemed to be some mystery about Mr. Lee, and a desire to keep his present place of living a secret, of course I did not press my inquiries. It would not surprise me to learn, sir, that Mr. Lee has been privately married, or—or something of that sort."

"I did not ask for your opinion, Mr. Jones."

"I beg pardon, sir," said Mr. Jones, and retired in a modest and thoroughly comfortable frame of mind.

As he drove home that evening, Mr. Trimble revolved the matter for the last time and came to a resolution.

CHAPTER XXII.

AND ACTS ON HIS RESOLVE.

WHAT was this resolution that Mr. Trimble had?

It was to come—without further dallying—to a settlement with Arnold.

Arnold must make a clean breast of it, or go. This is what Mr. Trimble had decided as he drove home the previous night.

Generosity and a certain meanness were interfused in him. His kinder moods—and he had them—were apt at all times to be dominated by a latent habit of suspicion. And when he suspected, he could and did act with prompt spitefulness.

He had brought himself to believe that Arnold had in some way deceived him. There was that in the solicitor's nature which would have created and fed such a belief; but the spark of mistrust once kindled in him, the poison-breath of Jones had blown it into flame.

We have seen something of the manner in which this flame had played about the head of Arnold these many weeks past; scorching him miserably. It had become a fire now, like to consume him.

There was ground, of course, for the unkindly feeling which Arnold's master had allowed himself to cherish against him. Arnold had never lifted a finger to remove or lighten the suspicions of Mr. Trimble. And these suspicions rested on a fair basis.

It was visible to common eyesight that all was not right with Arnold. Outwardly he was not the man he had been.

Himself only knew the struggle he had to maintain the paltriest show of respectability before his principal and his fellow-clerks; for he was living on a bare pound a week, with a rare guinea from McCallum. He could not hide altogether the effect of his straitened means; and he had chosen to keep the cause to himself. Suspicion then was free to work as it pleased.

Mr. Trimble knew that through some channel or other he had floated away two hundred and fifty pounds; and had seen that since that time Arnold's affairs had steadily declined.

Moreover, as regarded the work of the office, he had not maintained his old standard. The external causes which had operated to bring about this deterioration were beyond Mr. Trimble's ken. He had not seen the stealthy foot of Jones creeping about Arnold's room when Arnold was out of it; nor the diligent hand of Jones dropping precious papers into hidden recesses, and consigning unanswered letters to the safe shelter of the waste-paper basket.

Arnold knew his enemy, but had never found him in the field; and to take him by strategy was a task for which he had neither genius nor inclination. But his spirit had been somewhat overborne, and he was conscious this long time past of having done scant justice to himself in his daily work.

Here again Trimble saw the effects, but was (necessarily, to some extent) blind as to the real cause.

He believed that Arnold had fallen amongst evil company, and grown careless of and indifferent to his stewardship.

He felt therefore that he had strong and honest ground beneath him in the course he meant to take.

"Ask Mr. Lee to be good enough to step in." These were his first words on reaching the office the next morning.

Arnold presented himself at once, expecting some fresh ebullition of temper.

But there was no temper in the solicitor's face. Except that one hand rustled amongst the heap of unopened letters, he was quieter than usual.

He looked full at Arnold and said, "I have sent for you to speak with you on matters that concern us both. I am not satisfied with you, Lee."

"I am sorry to say I know that, sir," was Arnold's reply.

"I don't know what has come over you," pursued Mr. Trimble, "but you do not fill the place in my office that you once did. I had great hopes of you, Lee. You have disappointed them."

This was bitter measure for Arnold, but he stood quiet and made no answer. Mr. Trimble had the air and took the tone of a man who felt himself injured.

"There have been things in the past that required explanation," he went on. "You have not chosen to explain them, and I have not pressed you for an account as closely as I had a right to do. But we can go on in this way no longer. You must make a clean breast of it."

"What is it, sir, that you wish me to explain?" asked Arnold.

"Can you explain the falling-off in your work, for one thing?"

"I am afraid I could not explain everything without making accusations that you would not care to hear, Mr. Trimble," he replied.

"Accusations! What do you mean, Lee? Let us have no unfounded accusations, if you please."

"You will get nothing of that sort from me, sir; but perhaps I had better be silent."

"I am to understand, then, that you decline to give me any explanation?"

"I have nothing to explain, sir."

"I regret it," said Mr. Trimble, coldly. "I have had abundant evidence lately that your heart is not in your work. My interests in consequence have suffered. You have grown careless and, I am afraid, callous. You have affairs of your own for which mine have been neglected."

"No, sir, that is not the case," said Arnold, sturdily. "I am serving you now as conscientiously as I have ever done. What work I do other than yours is done away from here, in time that is my own."

"Yet persons connected with obscure newspapers (which it seems hardly fitting that one in your position should have anything to do with) call on you here, and are insolent to my clerks."

"I am certain that no friend of mine, who was fairly received, would be other than a gentleman to anybody here."

"Ah! Then in future perhaps your friends would do well not to risk receptions which do not appear to satisfy them."

"I will take care that they do not, sir."

"Thank you. But that is not all. Whether you are or are not serving me as conscientiously as before, the result is not what it used to be. I can not continue you in the post of manager here unless some decided change for the better takes place at once."

"In regard to my position here, I am in your hands entirely, sir."

Arnold spoke with respectful quietness, but his face and manner showed that he understood the gravity of Mr. Trimble's words.

"He seems sincere," thought Trimble; but at once corrected this thought with another. "He's too deep for me."

Nevertheless, the seeming honesty of Arnold's bearing touched him a little.

"You are involved in some foolish, and, I am afraid, in some bad business, Lee. I wish you would tell me what it is," he said next.

"Sir," replied Arnold, patiently, but with evident distress, "it would be kinder if you would put no questions to me that do not directly concern my relations with you."

"Yes, yes," said Trimble, impatiently, "but this *is* such a question. Whatever your entanglement be, it has affected you in every relation, professional and otherwise. Into a purely private matter I should have no right (and I hope no desire) to pry. But this is not altogether such a matter. I have been concerned in it to some extent from the first. Indeed, I consider myself not free from blame for the result. It was I who advanced you money, and that loan, or the use you made of it, is accountable for the deplorable state you are in at present. You can't deny that. Your troubles began from the day I foolishly lent you two hundred and fifty pounds. From that day the falling-off commenced in you and in your work. From that day I have had to find incessant fault with you. From that day you have been growing careless in professional matters, strange in manner, and indifferent in dress. Does this concern me or not?"

Arnold saw that his fate trembled in the balance. He

knew that a dozen words would save him. He was on the point of speaking them. The image of Marian rose in his mind, and loyalty to her carried the day. He held his peace, knowing that silence condemned him.

Mr. Trimble hesitated an instant, then said, with blunt directness, "It was for some woman you borrowed that money, Lee!"

It was a coarse way of putting it. Arnold winced, and an involuntary red tinged his cheek. Some woman! The sweet face of Marian shone before him.

Trimble saw the red in his cheek, and felt that he had given a home-thrust. He believed that he had reached truth at last. "I am right," he said to Arnold.

Chivalrous manhood asserted itself, and Arnold answered, "It is not yours, sir, to talk to me in this fashion! This affair is mine, and mine alone. I decline to speak of it."

"Good!" exclaimed Mr. Trimble, with a sudden flash of eye. "It is time that we closed our account. You had better seek another engagement, Lee."

He motioned Arnold to leave the room.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE RISING OF THE WATERS.

As Mr. Trimble had not dismissed him in so many words, Arnold on the following day gave formal notice to leave.

By this time Trimble's angry-jealous mood had spent itself, and he went out of his way to say that Arnold might take his own day for going.

"Let it be a month hence, or two months, if you please. Stay till you are suited elsewhere," he said.

But Arnold's blood pricked him; he felt that unjust measure had been dealt him. He would prefer to go in a week, he said.

Trimble, even in the generous mood, liked to be met half-way. At the least, a favor once rejected he never offered twice.

"Please yourself," was all he said, and the interview ended. No word passed between them as to the payment of the debt.

The week rolled itself out, and the morning of the day came on which Arnold was to leave.

He was resolved that there should be no sentiment at parting, and was concise almost to curtness in winding up with Mr. Trimble the business of his department.

"That, sir, is the last," he said, giving into the solicitor's hands a deed on which he had been at work the previous evening.

"Then I am afraid," said Mr. Trimble, not unkindly—and, indeed, with feeling—"that nothing remains but for us to shake hands and say good-bye."

"Yes, sir, there is one thing before that, if you will allow me," said Arnold, a certain hard quality in his voice. "Will you be so kind as to ask Mr. Jones to come here?"

Mr. Trimble looked at him an instant, his eye cold again, and his lips pursed. "What is this, Lee?" he asked dryly.

"I wish Mr. Jones to be present here a moment, sir, if you please," answered Arnold, very self-contained.

Now Trimble did not quite know what this boded. It could be nothing pleasant, though. Arnold scarcely wanted Jones to be present that he might embrace him before Mr. Trimble's eyes. He hated a scene, and halted a full half minute on the verge of a refusal; looked at Arnold again, and was met by two steadfast eyes, hardly to be denied; reached out an involuntary hand, and touched his bell.

"Mr. Jones—at once."

Jones, to be sure, was at hand, and smirked himself in on the instant. Trimble, thought he, was about to do him some honor in the face of the manager, cashiered.

"Mr. Lee wished you to be present here a moment."

This was not what he expected, but he smiled with all his teeth, and laid the palm of one hand on the back of the other, and looked everywhere but at Arnold.

"This is perhaps a little unusual, but—what can I do for Mr. Lee?" he queried, mildly.

"You can tell Mr. Trimble the reason why I am leaving him," broke out Arnold, turning with sudden passion on the lean thing, Jones. "You can tell him that he is dismissing me, who have served him with my best, because you, with that snake's fang of yours, have spit poison into him against me. You can tell him this, and more. You can say that you have been seen crawling into my room

whenever I was out of it; that you have been heard to lift my desk and creep amongst my papers when it was open, and try it with false keys when it was locked. You can say it was you who found a missing paper for me in a place where no hand but yours could have dropped it. You can say that there are those in the office who have heard you in here, when I was away, sneaking and slandering and lying, that you might cheat yourself again into the favor you lost by a blackguard's act twelve months ago, and worm me out of the place you hated me for having. Tell him this if you dare!"

It flowed out of Arnold like a lava torrent, and left him smoking.

The ineffectual victim writhed, but remained voiceless, limp, the skin drawn tightly over his face, his pale eyes quivering.

Mr. Trimble had kept silence, but glowered darkly. It was on Arnold that he glowered, not on Jones.

Jones made a giant effort, and recovered himself, but his tongue was dry and had to gather moisture before he could make it speak.

"Mr. Trimble, sir, I must leave this to you," he said at length. "You have heard these charges; if you bid me, I will answer them."

"It is not necessary," answered Trimble. "I have heard them, and dismiss them. I have sent Mr. Jones to your room, Lee, from time to time when you were out and I required some paper that was in your keeping. There is an answer to one of your charges. As to another of them, it presupposes that I was open to receive gossip of a malicious and slanderous sort about a clerk in my employ. That charge is therefore an insult to me. You have not raised my opinion of you, Lee, by this display. I had hoped to shake hands with you at parting; I can not do as I had hoped. Mr. Jones, you will take the place of manager in my office. Lee, I wish you good-day."

Arnold bowed very slightly to Mr. Trimble, and quitted the room without a word. He took his hat and went out of the office. His connection with Trimble and Trimble was at an end.

He went straight to his lodgings. There was nothing of the coward in his step. He felt stronger at that moment

than he had done for six months past. The elation of an anger which he felt to be just made his blood glow.

"I'm glad I bruised Jones." This was his feeling. His head was as though he had drunk a cup of strong wine.

At home, he paced his room awhile, every nerve spinning, bent on keeping himself at this pitch.

"No brooding, my young friend, if you please," he said, and felt as little like brooding as ever he had done in his life.

He sat down and did two hours' stout work with his pen. Then pocketed the manuscript and set off with it to McCallum at the office of the "Woolsack" in Mitre Court.

"Here's the article you wanted, Mac," he said, producing his roll.

"I want no airticles—from you or any mon."

With such pithy brevity the knight of the quill delivered himself, lifting a hairy head, and glaring at Arnold from beneath bushy eyebrows, out of deep-set eyes that had no speculation in them.

Arnold threw the manuscript on the table and sat down and laughed.

McCallum was as choke-full of humors as a hog's back of bristles.

"There's the article you wanted, Mac," repeated Arnold, and settled himself comfortably.

"Oh, Daniel McCallum," said the editor, apostrophizing an outrageous caricature of himself which hung on the opposite wall, "what a meeserable mon are you this day! Why did ye leave Glasgie, where ye might hev been meenister in a comely kirk, and banish yerself to siccan a brainless toon as London! Ye did it for the good of monkind, McCallum, and y' are made a fule and a bankrupt for your pains."

"You must use that article in the next number, Mac, for I'm very hard up," said Arnold.

"Take it to the buttermon. I've no use for it."

"Gammon! Don't plague me, Mac. It'll be the best thing in the next 'Woolsack.'"

"There'll no be a next 'Woolsack,'" growled McCallum. "The 'Woolsack's' as dead as the heart of Daniel McCallum."

"Dead? Stuff! Rubbish! What do you mean, Mac?"

"Just the little fuleish thing I say. The 'Woolsack's'

dead; and the heart of Daniel McCallum, she's dead as well."

"Do you really mean that the paper has come to a standstill, Mac?" exclaimed Arnold, aghast.

"Am I to repeat, and repeat, and repeat, with my mouth as dry as dust? I tell ye the 'Woolsack's' broke in twain; and the heart of Daniel McCallum, she's broke in twain also."

"Whew—w—w! Another string gone!" And Arnold looked blanker than he had done when Mr. Trimble gave him his *congé*.

"I'll take me back to Glasgie, and be a meenister in a comely kirk," said McCallum to himself, with no apparent relish for the prospect.

"And I'll go home and study the 'Press Directory,'" laughed Arnold, "for I must put this 'copy' in somewhere."

"But first, me dear Lee," said McCallum, earnestly, "come wi' me to The Cheese and let us drink to Glasgie and the meenisters of kirks. There's a wee of siller in the till."

"You forget, Mac, that I'm a teetotaler of six months' standing. Law wants a clearer head than journalism, you know."

"Journalism is a trade for loons; it's no for men with brains like mine. I'll be clear of it. I'll turrn teetotaler too—when I'm back in Glasgie."

Arnold returned to his lodgings; a little of the sparkle out of him, but by no means dumpish.

There was a letter waiting for him. He drew sweeter breath as he read it. It was from a solicitor of high standing, whom he had met many times in the course of business, and who had more than once hinted that he could find a new berth for him when he tired of his old one. Arnold had some repute in the profession as a man who was likely to rise.

His friend wrote that he understood Mr. Lee was about to leave Messrs. Trimble and Trimble, and suggesting that, if it were the case, Mr. Lee should call on Messrs. Seeling and White at his earliest convenience.

"Ha, ha!" laughed Arnold, "a good man in law doesn't need to bite his finger-nails for employment, I can see. What do you say to this, Messrs. Trimble and Trim-

ble? Out of your office in the morning, into another and a better in the afternoon. Come, come! I'll be married to Marian in six months."

He took up his hat to go at once to the office of Seeling and White. Decidedly the hat had grown a trifle seedy.

"No matter!" thinks Mr. Great-heart, "Seeling always wears a bad hat himself."

He was shown in at once to Mr. Seeling's private room.

"How do, Mr. Lee, how do? Take a seat, please, and excuse me one moment. So you are—eh?—they tell me you are—I hear that you are thinking of—there, I've finished—I understand that you are thinking of leaving Mr. Trimble."

"I have left him, sir."

"Already! At short notice, then. I saw you there a fortnight ago."

"I left at a week's notice, sir."

"Very short notice, that, was it not?" said Mr. Seeling, raising his eyes to Arnold's.

"At my own request," answered Arnold.

"Ah, to be sure," said Mr. Seeling, more confidently. "Then, Mr. Lee, I am afraid I need not have troubled you to call on us. You have doubtless suited yourself elsewhere before you left Mr. Trimble."

"No, sir, I had not and have not. I am without any engagement at present."

"Is that so?" said Mr. Seeling and brought himself to a pause.

He knew that Mr. Trimble had held a high opinion of Arnold, and had lately given him promotion; and he understood that Arnold himself had always been well satisfied with his position in the firm. Time enough, though, to discuss this.

"Well, Mr. Lee," he continued, "it happens that we have a vacancy here at this moment. One of our staff—an excellent fellow—is on the point of leaving us to commence practice on his own account. He has held the post of manager with us for some time."

Arnold intimated that up to the time of his leaving he had held a similar post with Messrs. Trimble and Trimble.

"So I understood, Mr. Lee, so I understood. Well, we have been in communication with another gentleman, who is qualified, and brings excellent credentials. He is, I

should imagine, a little older than yourself; but, as you say, you have already discharged the duties of manager. We have come to no settlement with him, and I may say that, hearing you were about to make a change, neither Mr. White nor myself wished to decide until we had communicated with you."

Arnold bowed his thanks, and showed himself gratified.

They had some further talk, professional all, and dry, and Mr. Seeling decided in himself that Arnold should have the place. At length he said, "There is only one other question I need put, Mr. Lee, and that I am sure you will take as a matter of course. Your reason for leaving Mr. Trimble?"

"I could tell you at once," replied Arnold, "but I think, on consideration, that I ought to refer you to Mr. Trimble himself."

"Quite so," returned Mr. Seeling, perfectly satisfied. "That would, no doubt, be the best."

They shook hands, and Mr. Seeling said that Arnold might expect to hear from him before the end of the week.

Arnold went home to his lodgings. He passed his tailor's on the way, but decided that he would not order a new suit till the end of the week.

On the day but one following he received a brief, formal note, not from Mr. Seeling, but from the firm. Messrs. Seeling and White had put themselves in communication with Messrs. Trimble and Trimble, and regretted that they felt unable to continue their negotiations with Mr. Lee.

Arnold pondered the letter for twenty minutes. Should he accept defeat? Or should he strike a blow for himself? A blow, by all means!

He went straight to Seeling and White, and was shown into Mr. Seeling's room. With Mr. Seeling he remained in close talk for a good half-hour.

At the end Mr. Seeling said: "I am glad that you came, Mr. Lee; your explanation is wholly good; I am more than satisfied with it."

"Then will you give me the managership?"

"I am sorry a thousand times that that is impossible. At Mr. White's request we wrote last night to appoint the gentleman I named to you."

CHAPTER XXIV.

MR. TRIMBLE REMEMBERS ARNOLD.

For a day or two Arnold's spirits were below their normal level. Under three successive strokes of fate one can not choose but wince.

But he was bound to recover, for he felt like a man on trial, who is all the better for a clear head and a sound digestion. He applied the salve of philosophy to his wounds, and argued that a little failure is necessary at the outset, that a man may find his level and his strength. If one offer had come so quickly, there would not be long to wait for another. He had the healthy, sanguine temperament which will not whine over the irrecoverable.

Outwardly, to be sure, there was some change in Arnold since we saw him at the beginning of the year. He looked like a man who was on bad terms with his tailor. His best coat had been in daily wear these three months past, and it had seen a year's Sunday service before that. His face had lost something of its lighter look, but there was nothing of the specter about him yet. He would have taken it unkindly if you had suggested that he was not looking quite his old self. He had settled himself in a street not five minutes' walk from the office of Trimble and Trimble in Bedford Row—a street, nevertheless, in which one who courted obscurity might hide more effectually than in the crypt of St. Paul's.

Robert Street, Bedford Row, lies at the back of and parallel with Gray's Inn Road. At one end of it there is a mews for hansom cabs, which Arnold said would be a convenient when he needed to go in a hurry to accept the next situation that offered. Robert Street is short and narrow, and of an almost forbidding cleanliness. Respectable commonplace poverty, with sentiment eliminated, is stamped on every house. At midday and in the afternoon it is as deserted as Goldsmith's village. Gray-headed, lean-featured landladies hover from time to time behind their window-blinds, and peer, like Fatima, for assistance in the

shape of lodgers; for lodgers are less plentiful than lodging-houses in Robert Street.

Arnold had taken a furnished room in one of these ugly brown tenements at a rent of seven shillings a week, attendance included, which meant that when one had exhausted his lungs in calling down the back-stairs the landlady shot out from somewhere in the basement, and said she was too busy to go up.

To describe Arnold as comfortable in his new quarters would be to deprive him unfairly of some of the reader's sympathy. But there was nothing squalid in his surroundings. He had less space at his disposal than is allotted to a first-class misdemeanant, and standing on tiptoe he could touch the ceiling with his head. There was no superfluous furniture in the room, and every article required careful handling.

But George Sand, Balzac, and Victor Hugo worked in a garret, and "Don Quixote" and the "Pilgrim's Progress" were written in a prison. Arnold remembered this, and was inclined to take himself to task for not having migrated at once to the top floor. True genius, he thought, would have scorned a lower flight. He consoled himself with the reflection that circumstances might compel him to go up higher in the course of a month or two. At the least, it was something to his credit that he had only one room.

When he had breakfasted he locked away all the valuables he possessed, and went out, ostensibly for half an hour's stroll, but in reality at the bidding of his landlady, who had intimated on the morning after his arrival that she couldn't have no gents about when she was bed-making.

Having taken his constitutional willy-nilly, he seated himself at his table, and spent the morning in writing. Most of his work was speculative at present, the untimely death of the "Woolsack" having cut the ground from under his feet so far as journalism was concerned. But he set himself to turn out a certain quantity of "copy" every morning, and plied his pen from nine o'clock till one.

He had finished his writing one morning about ten days after the earthquake described in the last chapter, and, putting the result aside, sat down again to consider the

situation from a financial standpoint. He took out pencil and paper and drew up his budget. It was by no means an unsatisfactory one.

He had in hand a sum of nearly fifty pounds. The whole of this was to have been devoted to paying off the debt to Mr. Trimble, and the question Arnold submitted to himself was the use to which this money should be put in the present condition of affairs.

Should he hand it over to his creditor?

On full consideration, no. For to do this would be to beggar himself at a stroke, he being at the moment without a livelihood.

Arnold considered that if he paid away this fifty pounds, which was capital and income both, he might be putting it out of his power to liquidate the remainder of the debt.

Better hold it, for at the present low rate of his expenditure it would keep him above water for some months to come. In that time something could and must be wrested from the hand of fortune, and once in the swim of professional work again it would be easy to settle with Mr. Trimble. The collapse of the chair he was sitting on interrupted his seculations.

He was on his knees putting it to rights when he became aware that some one had entered the room and was standing behind him.

He turned and saw Jones.

Arnold's gorge rose; a feeling of unmitigated contempt surged in him. Here was a man to whom ten days ago he had given a semi-public chastisement. He had seen Jones writhe and grow white and his eyes shoot hatred under the whip; yet here was Jones, soft, suave, and smiling as though they had parted brothers. One would have hanged a spaniel had he proved so much a spaniel.

"Shall I kick Jones?" thought Arnold. No; why put a compliment on him? "Have you any business with me?" he asked.

Mr. Jones looked quite the genteel embassador. There was a summer-like air of prosperity about him; his tailor had made him an ideal manager.

"Let the general build of the coat be managerial, with just a dash of *insouciance* in the trimming," he had said to his tailor.

"Have you any business with me?" inquired Arnold.

"Business? Oh, dear boy! Fy! Never business with any one outside the shop, you know. Touching up the furniture a little?"

"If you have no business with me, you can go," returned Arnold.

"I take that as very unkind," said Jones. "If I were proud, I might come here to demand an apology; if I were disposed for litigation, I might come to threaten you with an action for libel—"

"I'll meet you there when you like, Jones."

"No, dear boy, you will not meet there; for I bear no malice, and ask nothing but friendship. I remember nothing. You were a little outrageous the other day. What of it? You were under the wind, and perhaps Trim had been a little too hard on you. I always told him so. I liked your spirit."

"You looked as if you liked it," said Arnold.

"Just so. I knew you'd think better of it when you came to yourself. I never mind what a man says at those times. I'd have said the same myself. Not but what I think it was a pity, you know; it did get Trim's back up so. And Trim has such a standing in the profession; he can do a man no end of harm when he takes a spite against him."

Arnold thought of the abrupt termination of his negotiations with Seeling and White, but said:

"Mr. Trimble is a gentleman, Jones, which perhaps is more than could be said for some of his advisers."

"Meaning me? Oh, come, come! Why, I have not stopped talking to him about you since you left."

"I don't doubt you."

"Ah, but not in the way you mean. Why Trim's been blazing against you ever since. There's that little debt, you know. Not that I've let him say much to me about it; no affair of mine. But Trim will talk, don't you see, and he has let out that he thinks you don't mean to pay him. Now, if I were you, I'd do something in the humble way; sing small for awhile. It doesn't hurt; I've done it myself before now."

"You have," said Arnold; "you have, Jones."

"Yes, and it's paid me, hasn't it? Who's the manager

now? You hold your head too high, dear boy. Now, just take my line for a bit. Write something pious to Trim; say you feel sure you were wrong in putting the blame on me. Trim would make it up with you in no time, and you'd find yourself in another berth in a week.''

"Or, better still, your character will be cleared before Mr. Trimble. You know me better than that, Jones. What I said I meant, and I stand to it. As for me, I can take care of myself. As for you, you had better improve that talent for singing small; for I fancy you'll need it. You have got the whip-hand now; how you managed to get it I have told both you and Trimble. Keep it as long as you can. If Trimble sent you sneaking here to look after his money—though I don't believe it—you can say that the debt is a good deal safer with me than it would be with you. And you can go.''

"Go's the word, then; I hate to stay when I'm not wanted. Take note, dear boy, that I go like a friend, without reproaches. And—oh! wait a minute, though. A little present from Trim. He begged me to be sure and give it into your own hands.''

So saying, Mr. Jones drew out of his pocket a good-sized white document, which he handed to Arnold, who perceived at a glance that it was of legal import. Arnold received it coolly.

"So this was your business, was it? You came to serve me with a writ,'' he said.

"Always better that these things should be done in a friendly way, don't you think?'' smiled Mr. Jones. "I thought it rather kind of Trim to let me take it. Giving me a chance of looking you up, and showing I bear no malice. Any answer?''

"If there is, I'll send it. Now, will you go?''

But Mr. Jones had already skipped away, and was heard as he went down-stairs complimenting the landlady on the neatness of her house—a compliment she must have found it difficult to swallow.

Arnold opened and looked at Mr. Trimble's present with a very strange feeling in his heart. He scarcely believed what his own eyes revealed to him. Had Trimble resolved to crush him? And was this the method he had chosen?

Here is a fac-simile of the document with which Jones

had been intrusted, and which that prince amongst friends had carried with so much good-will.

1884.—T.—No. 002.

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUSTICE.

QUEEN'S BENCH DIVISION.

Between RUPERT TRIMBLE,

Plaintiff.

and

ARNOLD LEE,

Defendant.

VICTORIA, by the Grace of God of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, Queen, Defender of the Faith, *To* ARNOLD LEE, *of* 201 ROBERT STREET, *Bedford Row, in the County of Middlesex.* We command you, That within Eight Days after the Service of this Writ on you, inclusive of the day of such Service, you cause an Appearance to be entered for you in an Action at the Suit of RUPERT TRIMBLE, *of Bedford Row, in the said County.*

And take notice that in default of your so doing the Plaintiff may proceed therein, and Judgment may be given in your absence. Witness, ROUNDELL, EARL OF SELBORNE, Lord High Chancellor of Great Britain, the 20*th* day of *June*, in the year of our Lord One thousand eight hundred and eighty-*four*.

N.B.—This Writ is to be served within TWELVE Calendar Months from the date thereof, or, if renewed, within SIX Calendar Months from the date of the last renewal, including the day of such date, and not afterward.

The Defendant may appear hereto by entering Appearance , either personally or by Solicitor, at the Central Office, Royal Courts of Justice, London.

STATEMENT OF CLAIM.

The Plaintiff's Claim is *for* £250 *for money lent.*

Particulars:

£250 *lent by Plaintiff to Defendant on the* 29*th December*, 1883.

(Signed) RUPERT TRIMBLE.

And the sum of £ : *(or such sum as may be allowed on taxation)* for Costs. If the amount claimed be paid to the Plaintiff within four days from the Service hereof, further proceedings will be stayed.

This Writ was issued by RUPERT TRIMBLE,

of 004, *Bedford Row*,

whose Address for Service is *as aforesaid*, the said Plaintiff.

This Writ was served by me at 201, ROBERT STREET, *Bedford Row*, on the Defendant ARNOLD LEE, on *Tuesday*, the 24*th* day of *June*, 1884.

Indorsed the 25*th* day of *June*, 1884,

(Signed) J. T. JONES,

(Address) 004, *Bedford Row.*

No need to tell Arnold what this meant. It was the first step to bankruptcy.

CHAPTER XXV.

HABET!

ARNOLD foresaw that there would be no escape. On to this rock of bankruptcy he must inevitably be driven.

To avoid it by payment of the debt was impossible. Fifty pounds was all his fortune; he would be stripped of that, and when they had beggared him bankruptcy would follow; and bankruptcy marks the scutcheon of the professional man with the bar sinister. He had no choice but to wait

the course of events. He knew what this would be, and winced in anticipation.

Mr. Rupert Trimble meanwhile sat like a spider in the center of his web, and watched for a move on the part of the victim. He knew that Arnold could not free himself from the meshes he had put about him.

The hand of Jones was at work in this ungenerous scheme. Left alone, Trimble would by and by have regretted his dismissal of Arnold. He would not have recalled him, but he would have helped him secretly, and in all probability would have flatly refused to accept further payment of the debt.

Jones knew the sympathetic as well as the bilious moods of his principal, and meant that the latter should be uppermost until Arnold was fairly disposed of. He represented that Arnold had probably brought his dismissal on himself with the deliberate intent of escaping payment of the debt by getting clear away from Mr. Trimble's power.

"He meant to move off quietly and set up in practice for himself under another name, sir," said Jones.

By much falsification and malicious suggestion of this sort he kept Mr. Trimble's anger smoking against Arnold, and drew him on to set the law in motion.

"Such conduct deserves to be made an example of. I'll bring him to his senses," said the solicitor; and the bankruptcy of Arnold was determined on.

Arnold entered no appearance, and the eight days of grace went by. Mr. Trimble signed judgment, and execution issued.

By and by Arnold received notice of a petition in bankruptcy, filed by Mr. Trimble. Knowing the various steps in the process, he again decided that action on his part was useless. He could not ward off the final stroke, and had nothing to gain by delay.

He saw himself gazetted. This was the beginning of publicity, and Arnold's cheeks tingled as he thought of the friends at home and abroad who would read his humiliation in print. They would all see it, he felt sure; they would be astonished, shocked, shamed; and the barren satisfaction of explanation was forbidden him.

The sordid business of stripping and breaking the poor boy was now in full progress. He had to present himself before the official receiver to make a statement of his

affairs. This was a bluff, good-natured person, who looked on bankruptcy as a more or less indispensable part of the practical education of man, and treated Arnold with some show of respect as a young gentleman who had begun his training in good time.

"Nothing like it to open a man's eyes," said the receiver. "But I don't like to see them putting it off too long. Get it over soon, and you're all the better for it. It's like the measles. You have them as a baby, and they don't amount to much. You have them twenty years after, and maybe they do for you. Liabilities two-fifty; assets five-and-forty. Do you want an allowance?"

The receiver, when he has effectually spoiled the victim, is authorized to make him an allowance pending the winding-up of his affairs; as they used to keep alive on bread and water certain prisoners who were destined to be tortured to death.

Arnold, however, had reserved something less than five pounds for his immediate necessities, and declined the offer of an allowance.

This the receiver thought a mistake, and told him so; but Arnold thanked his friend and said he had sufficient for present requirements.

"Very good; we'll keep this little lot for the creditor. Only one creditor, by the way; that's rather odd, isn't it?"

But Arnold was not disposed to gossip, and said he believed there was no further business to be done.

"Not at present; you'll get your notice of the public examination, you know."

The public examination—the stage of bankruptcy itself—was all that now remained to be gone through.

Arnold awaited his summons, and received it in due course. He was to present himself at the office of the registrar in Portugal Street, there to undergo examination in the interests of the creditor.

Arnold had been present at one of these inquisitorial functions not long since in behalf of Mr. Trimble, a principal creditor then as he was the sole creditor now, and he did not relish the prospect.

The public examination is a sort of legal bull-fight, on a small and vulgar scale, the defendant being in the place of the bull, while the gentlemen with the little biting darts are represented by the creditors. The show is presided

over by the registrar, who sees that the bull is properly goaded before he himself dispatches him.

On the morning of the sacrifice Arnold received a letter from Marian, in answer to the one he had written her some time before. Marian had not replied as soon as she intended, Gilbert Reade had taken that plunge of his in the meantime, and her letter to Arnold had been penned amid very conflicting feelings.

It was not the buoyant, girlish letter Arnold had been wont to receive from her in days gone by. Tenderness was not wanting, but the tone was restrained, and something lacked which Arnold was puzzled to account for. She seemed to have written under nervous pressure of some sort, and spoke throughout of being anxious to return home as quickly as possible. Altogether the letter went some way to mystify Arnold, and the first reading gave him a vague feeling of disquiet. He was much more concerned about Marian than about his public examination.

But he had no time then for a second reading, so, putting the letter in his pocket, he set off for Portugal Street.

He wondered whether Mr. Trimble would meet him in person. The solicitor, as Arnold knew, had no taste for these affairs, and generally, when concerned in a case of bankruptcy, had been represented by one of his clerks. Arnold in this instance would have preferred to encounter Mr. Trimble himself. The registrar, whom Arnold had met before in more agreeable circumstances, sat to receive him in a dingy room in his office in Portugal Street. He offered a word or two of polite condolence, which the official receiver, who was beside him, appeared to regard as superfluous. He on his part gave Arnold a pleasant nod, which seemed to say: "Plenty of sport directly. Glad you've come early."

The registrar said the weather looked more settled.

Arnold said the glass was falling, and there would probably be rain before night.

The registrar said he was sorry to hear it.

The official receiver said it did not seem to make much difference to business whether it rained or snowed or blowed.

But just then the door opened and Mr. Jones ushered himself in with a smile in which sympathy for the defend-

ant was blended with a consciousness of the rectitude of his own mission.

"I am here for Mr. Trimble," said Mr. Jones, bowing to the registrar. "Ah, Lee, how do? Mr. Trimble requested me to take the little matter in hand, though, of course, I would rather he had come himself. But we shall make it as simple and pleasant as possible, I am sure."

"Mr. Trimble is a principal creditor, I believe?" said the registrar.

"He is the only creditor," replied Mr. Jones.

"The only creditor! This is unusual," said the registrar.

"Yes; rather a singular, and, in some respects, a painful, case," observed Mr. Jones, in an under-tone, to the registrar, who merely bowed.

The official receiver reported assets forty-five pounds, against liabilities of two hundred and fifty pounds.

"Mr. Lee is or was in the service of Mr. Trimble, I think?" remarked the registrar.

Arnold replied that he had been in Mr. Trimble's service until very recently.

"Is there any statement you would like to make, Mr. Lee?" inquired the registrar.

Arnold answered that he had very little to say. "Mr. Trimble," he continued, "advanced me an amount of two hundred and fifty pounds some months ago for a private purpose, which I was unable to explain to him. There were misunderstandings between us subsequently in regard to the work of the office, and I left Mr. Trimble a short time since. I commenced the repayment of the loan within a week from the day of receiving it, and the repayments were continued up to the date of my leaving Mr. Trimble's office. I am without employment at the moment, but it was my intention to commence the repayments again as soon as I should be in a position to do so. I have nothing to add, except that these proceedings have taken me entirely by surprise, that I regard them as wholly uncalled for, and, I may say, unjust."

"You have received forty-five pounds from Mr. Lee, I think you said, Mr. Green?" observed the registrar to the official receiver.

"Forty-five," replied that functionary.

"And you say, Mr. Lee, that you were making your re-

payments regularly up to the time when you left Mr. Trimble?"

"Regularly," answered Arnold. "I was sacrificing the larger portion of my income with a view to clearing myself of the debt."

"Then I confess," said the registrar, turning to Mr. Jones as the creditor's representative—"I confess that I do not understand these proceedings."

"I can assure you in Mr. Trimble's behalf," replied Mr. Jones, "that they were undertaken by him with the greatest unwillingness. I have a rather unpleasant duty to perform here, but it *is* a duty, and I must not neglect it. Mr. Lee, I should perhaps say, has chosen to hold me in some way responsible for the displeasure he incurred at Mr. Trimble's hands. Mr. Trimble is as fully convinced as I am myself that Mr. Lee's suspicions are unfounded, but the fact that (as I believe) he still cherishes them makes my position here one of some delicacy."

"Pardon me if I suggest that your position here is not precisely the subject we are met to inquire into," said the registrar.

"Precisely," returned Jones. "But I thought it necessary to explain this much. I believe I have a right, in the creditor's interest, to put some questions to the bankrupt?"

"Yes, you may do so," answered the registrar; "but perhaps, in the circumstances, Mr. Lee will volunteer some further statement in reference to the loan."

"I am afraid I can make no statement other than the one you have just had from me," said Arnold.

"I really must, in Mr. Trimble's behalf, press for some explanation of the way in which this large sum of money has been spent," said Jones. "Mr. Trimble may fairly demand to know that it has not been squandered or used for any dishonorable object."

"It has not been squandered or used dishonorably," answered Arnold.

"Then why need you hesitate to give the court some account of the expenditure?"

"The money was used for a purely private purpose. I can not at present state what that purpose was."

"Let me urge you, in your own interest, Mr. Lee, to say a little more," put in the registrar.

"Your way of living," said Mr. Jones, "would that account for any extraordinary expenditure?"

"My way of living has been that of a man whose income covered, and no more than covered, the simplest and most necessary expenses."

"You are not addicted, I believe, to—to gambling, for example?"

"I do not gamble."

"And I think I may say that you have always borne a character for sobriety?"

"I have deserved it."

"Then the 'private' object you speak of," persisted Jones, "can scarcely be described as a personal one?"

"I did not use the money for myself."

"Now, really, I think you ought, in fairness to Mr. Trimble, to volunteer some explanation of your expenditure of his loan. It was an act of kindness on his part, you must admit, to advance this sum of money with nothing more than your personal security for its repayment."

"It was a great act of kindness, but I can only repeat that I did not ask for the money for myself."

"And you will tell us no more than this?"

"I am not able to say more."

Mr. Jones made a gesture which signified that he had done the best he could with a very bad case, and must leave the rest to the registrar.

That functionary looked annoyed. The proceedings puzzled him, he said. The case appeared to be a painful one, but the creditor was entitled to the protection of the court, and he could not think that the defendant had given as full an explanation as the creditor's representative was justified in demanding. In these circumstances he had no alternative but to adjourn the matter.

CHAPTER XXVI.

WHAT NEXT?

So it has ended pretty well after all? The matter is adjourned, the registrar is kindly disposed, and means to give Arnold another chance of clearing himself. At the next meeting he will be able to show the iniquity of the whole proceedings, and they will not make a bankrupt of him at all.

The reader who reasons thus is entitled, from the standpoint of the official receiver, to a certain amount of sympathy, for he has clearly not been through the Court of Bankruptcy, and his education is therefore incomplete.

Arnold knew much better than this. The matter was not really adjourned at all; it was, to every intent and purpose, ended.

"Adjournment" is the most dread sentence a bankrupt can receive. It means that the registrar is not satisfied with the defendant's explanation, and declines to give him a certificate.

Now, bankruptcy, which means, literally, the breaking of one's "bench," is a bad state in all conscience, but bankruptcy minus a certificate is seven times worse. In some cases it signifies nothing less than ruin; it signified nothing less than this to Arnold, for it not only put a brand upon him—it deprived him besides of the right and power to practice in his profession. He was a dishonored man, and a man whose right hand had been severed.

Thus effectually had Mr. Trimble, aided and abetted by Jones, contrived to lay Arnold in the dust.

When trades-unions were young and savage, men who transgressed their laws were blown up with gunpowder or otherwise physically corrected. How much more refined a mode of chastening your enemy to make him pass through the Court of Bankruptcy in circumstances which shall insure his not receiving a certificate?

Some slight formalities having been disposed of, Arnold quitted the office of the registrar and returned to his lodging. His mind was dulled, but not so much so that he failed to realize the completeness of his ruin. Had he not steeled his heart, he would have sat down and cried like a child. Fame, fortune, and future had been cut from him at a stroke.

But just now he thought nothing of these: he thought only of Marian, between whom and himself the registrar in bankruptcy had set a deep and impassable gulf. He sat down and wrote a letter to his uncle, giving as full an account of his trouble as he felt justified in committing to paper. He added that, until he had completely righted himself, his friends at home would not hear of him again.

What step the next? That he really did not know.

CHAPTER XXVII.

A GLIMPSE OF DEATH.

GILBERT READE'S proposal had been nothing less than a shock to Marian. Common opinion is pleased to hold that all proposals of marriage are regarded as compliments by the women who receive them. But Marian was at first disposed to consider the proposal of Gilbert Reade in the light almost of an offense.

Not for long, however, did she succeed in keeping him before her in the character of an offender. He had borne himself too courteously for that! she could not but admit it. Was it her fault, then, that he had proposed to her? She supposed that it must have been. Thus Marian reasoned in child-like and most untutored fashion.

The truth is, she was content with the world as she found it. She was anxious only to get back to her books and her work and be strong enough to resume her old life in the cloistered quietude of some purely feminine society. This was her first expedition beyond the home circle, except where there were none but those of her own sex—hard-working students to whom (professedly, at all events) masculine attentions were an object of mild satire.

It was not until Reade had quitted Madeira that the affair of the proposal began to take full effect on her mind and nerves. It is trivial to say that she could not banish it from her thoughts; of course she could not, and her thoughts about it vexed her, whatever the form they took. When she thought of herself she was vexed with herself; when she thought of Reade she was vexed with him. She had wakeful nights, disagreeables of rare occurrence since the excitement of the glorious student times which she would give the world to be tasting again.

But events such as Reade's declaration are not to be passed over in a day or two, and no more thought of; they color the life. It is not as when a stream leaps a rock and flows on; it is as when a stream touches some foreign runlet, the stain can not be wiped out. When incidents like this are done, they can not be undone.

Marian had shown neither surprise nor emotion when

Mrs. Warren told her, late on the night of the proposal, that Gilbert had suddenly resolved (that concern of business being no doubt more pressing than he had pretended) to return to the Cape by the steamer leaving the next morning. She eat both her breakfasts in her own room that morning, merely sending Reade, through Mrs. Warren, a polite message regretting the necessity of his sudden departure, and conveying her thanks for the kindness he had shown her during his stay.

This was cold. But Mrs. Warren, she thought, knew nothing of what had happened at the Twenty-five Fountains on the previous day, and she considered it necessary to keep that good lady mystified. A little more wisdom of the world would perhaps have shown her that this kind of conduct was the likeliest to open Mrs. Warren's eyes.

Gilbert also sent a message—but he did more; he sent a letter with it. Letter and message were transmitted through the ever-faithful chaperon.

The message was brief as Marian's own. The sender thanked Marian for her thanks, and regretted that he had not had the pleasure of making his adieus in person.

The letter, which was written in simple, earnest language, plunged at once into the matter which had made an epoch in the lives of both. It was wholly candid. Gilbert said that he had been near her three weeks, and known no impulse of love. Admiration he had felt from the first, for he had seen that she was fitted to be the companion of any true man whatsoever. Had he always borne himself toward her as he should have done? Perhaps not; but until he met her he had known few women, and finding that hers was an intellect more than feminine, he had treated her as a man treats a man, his equal. Insensibly, and against his will, he had grown to love her. Insensibly, because he knew not when his love had begun, nor whether nor how long it had lain dormant in him. He knew only that a day came when love for her asserted itself as his master-passion, since when he had found no rest until the words he spoke to her the afternoon before had forced themselves from his lips. Against his will, because, like her, he had never desired to marry; but—and here the writer broke into that half-lyrical strain of passionate pleading which sweeps the soberest souls at such moments. A close-written page in this vein (he had sat up half the

night over the letter) and then, the wild fit passing, he became coherent again. He would not, for he could not, believe that she had finally dismissed him. He left her, not because her words had any power to change his feelings, but because it must be a pain to him to be near her and not speak again what she had forbidden him. He left her; would she ever bid him, would she ever suffer him, to return?

The letter was read and put away. A half shaped thought rose in the form of a question—"Had she treated him quite fairly?" But the answer came on the instant. "Yes! a thousand times yes;" for she had neither encouraged nor trifled with him, and she had fairly answered him. Yet it was well, she thought, that she was saved the necessity of replying to his letter.

Gilbert gone, Marian and Mrs. Warren resumed their quiet, vacant life of former weeks. But Marian had ceased to be content with it; she exerted herself bravely to insure the re-establishment of her health, beginning to hunger once more for him.

Mrs. Warren humored her, but waited in secret for Gilbert's return.

Of course they missed him. Of course Marian could not pluck from her memory the words he had spoken, nor become oblivious of the letter he had written. She read the letter more than once—her life was almost isolated. The sentences began to grow into her mind, to link themselves with her thoughts. Often they recurred, and as they took image before her she conceived a curiously inconsequential fancy, which seemed to run side by side with the utterances of Gilbert Reade.

"What would Arnold say to him? What would he think of me?"

Mrs. Warren's words about Arnold had adhered in her memory. This thought was followed by another, of such idyllic simplicity as this, pictured rather than embodied: "Dear Arnold! He never would have presumed as this stranger has done."

But the stranger was not a stranger; the maidenly mind did not so entirely dismiss him.

And Mrs. Warren? How did she comport herself these delicate times?

With all her ardent desire that Gilbert should succeed,

she was not without admiration for the courage and independence of Marian. She contrived, by here and there a casual word, to let Marian know that she was aware of what had transpired, whereat Marian wondered in herself how she could have been foolish enough to suppose that she had kept or could keep such a matter from the intelligence of her chaperon.

Their friendship suffered nothing; indeed, new links were added, and be sure that Mrs. Warren was faithful to the cause of the absent Gilbert.

Somehow, too, she obtained assistance from Three Dykes, the lieutenant in his letters at this time becoming very emphatic in his recommendations to Marian to be guided entirely by Mrs. Warren's counsel as to the length of her stay in Madeira, on no account to think of returning until she was completely recovered.

In this way two or three weeks elapsed, a certain restlessness and vague uneasiness growing all the while in Marian. She began to chafe against the forced inaction of her life in this golden drowsy land. She was strong again, and missed the energy of the days when Gilbert Reade guided all their movements. Should she take horse and ride? No, she had no companion, and was less fond of solitude than she had been. The air was odorous with the breath of flowers; should she sit all day in the garden? No, its beauty wearied her.

She felt that she was being spoiled by idleness, yet here she could not do the work she craved. But for this, too, she was angered with herself. "A man would find some craft even here, but I sit all day moping like a dull schoolgirl."

In recent letters from Three Dykes she found another cause of worry. They lacked a certain cheeriness which until now had been their dominant note. They mentioned nothing unpleasant, yet they left something unmentioned. What this was she could not think.

What was it? Well, the truth is that for one whole month there had been a careful avoidance of the name of —but let it pass, for Marian merely did not understand it.

Presently Mrs. Warren began to hint with more or less directness that the times were out of joint since Gilbert went away. Marian admitted that she missed the expeditions to the mountains.

One day they came down-stairs and found their gentleman breakfasting in the common room of the hotel. He was returning to England, he said, and had landed from the steamer to wish the ladies good-morning.

"Where is your luggage?" was Mrs. Warren's first inquiry after she had kissed him.

"On the steamer, Aunt Susan."

"Then let it be sent for at once, for you certainly can not return until we do."

So Gilbert was installed again in his old quarters at the hotel.

Marian received him with a kind graciousness, determined not to be lackadaisical. Something was due to politeness, something to past good offices, something to Mrs. Warren's kindness. Gilbert was entertained on the same footing as before.

As day followed day he thought that his suit made no progress; and visible progress it did not make. But what had gone before had given a new color to their relations, and it was certain that Marian showed no disposition to deny him her society because she had declined to marry him.

He was a lover who wooed with other than the common arts; indeed, he did not now talk to her of love at all. He seemed rather to have taken the part of old friend and companion. Ever at her side when she wanted him, absent when she fancied she did not; quiet, and imperturbably good-humored; and in time he began to influence her mind, if not her heart, and she grew to feel the sense of dependence, which is dangerous.

As for him, though he made no show of what he felt, he felt keenly. He had drifted into love, not knowing whither his bark was bearing him, half jesting at the notion that he could ever drop anchor at that port. And now to be in it, and find no rest! To find no rest, and yet not be able to escape from it!

To change the metaphor, it was the Tantalus drama played again. The cup ever at his lips, but never a taste of the nectar. Ever at his lips, for she was always soft and pleasant to him, and—since two people can not hold quite the same intercourse as before, after one has made a confession of love to the other—there was now an intimate something between them, which discovered itself in subtle

ways. He had showed her his heart; there had been talk of love between them: if friendship be resumed after these things, it must be friendship and something more. But this something more—what was it?

It might be akin to love, but love's self it was not.

It was this indeterminate, elusive character of their relations which irked and wearied him.

Surely never woman was so hard to win as this!

Sometimes he doubted her, thought that she was playing with his love, as in a wayward mood she would undo and scatter the petals of a flower he had plucked for her. Was she fair to him.

Yes; he could not call her unfair, for she never flirted with him, never tempted him by look or word to renew his declaration.

So, blind as Eros himself, he followed without nearing her; as in a wood by night one follows the errant fires of the will-o'-the-wisp.

But was it not possible to compel her to accept him or reject him? Alas! has she not rejected him already? What but her softness prevents her from rejecting him again?

But there is no standing still with any of us; one goes forward or one retreats. Now, she had not retreated from the attitude she had taken toward him soon after his return—an attitude of honest liking, of admiration for his simple, strong fidelity to her. So the time came when she must needs go beyond this, and then, not seen by him, and seen scarcely at all by herself, her heart began to expand, and she felt herself drawn toward him.

Against this feeling she struggled. She fell in sore doubt. She did not know her own heart; she did not know the way of duty. She had read Arnold's letter more than once of late, and had begun dimly to apprehend a meaning in it which she had not found there at the first.

Was Arnold in love with her?

Had Arnold been there in Reade's place, had he wooed her as Reade had done, he might ere this have won her. But Arnold was many hundred miles away in London, sore troubled, though of this Marian knew nothing. Reade was in her sight continually; his the voice that breathed in her ear all day, his the hand that never ceased to wait upon her.

. . . .

The time drew near for them to return to England, and Gilbert was to take them on a last expedition.

They went to Santa Anna, which a wise traveler had said seemed to him more like a realization of the poet's Arcadia than any other place he ever saw. The rare earth of Santa Anna yields increase of corn, vines, yams, and sugar-canes. A people simple and peaceful as the first Arcadians occupies this high-perched Eden of Madeira, tilling the soil, and living in the strangest huts, roofed in with long-ridged thatch, sheltered by bamboo fences, and smothered in fern, fuchsia, and geranium, which cover the ground and embroider the edges of the smooth red paths.

Pico Ruivo, "the mountain-citadel of Madeira," rises in the background, glancing at the sea from a cloudy height of six thousand feet.

To Pico Ruivo Marian was bent on ascending. Mrs. Warren said yes, if she willed it, but declined the ascent for herself. They were comfortably lodged for a day or two in the house of that courteous Portuguese gentleman who, recovering from "the ignoble melancholy which springs from pecuniary embarrassment" (the phrase is Lord Beaconsfield's), became wise in his day, and turned his country house into a hotel. Mrs. Warren preferred to remain here until the return of the explorers, "If," she added, with a shudder—"if you ever do return." Gilbert assured her they would be back to dinner.

The horses, with their heels well turned up, and large nails projecting from every shoe, climbed valiantly; part of the ascent they had nothing better than a steep cattle-path, then not even a bridle-path, but had to pick a rugged way from crag to crag. Finally a point was reached when there was nothing for it but to dismount and leave the horses in the keeping of one of the guides.

From this, with one guide in front, they went on together.

"Take my hand," said Gilbert, for the path was almost impassable—yet a level one, thought the lover, in comparison with the path to her affections. "If I had the tongue of Martin Tupper," said he, presently, "I could bring out some fine analogies respecting this path and the path of life."

"Mr. Tupper is a very good man; I will not hear him decried," she answered.

"I ask his pardon—and yours," said Gilbert.

Passing through a cleft in the ridge, they climbed the straight sides of Ruivo, winding amongst enormous heath-trees, lonely and gray with years.

The last rock was topped at length, and the guide, turning about, said, in tones subdued to a fine impressiveness, "Pico Ruivo!"

But they could see nothing, so thick the clouds that curtained them on every side.

"Cloud no break themself to-day; go home," said the guide, who had breakfasted early.

"We'll give the clouds a chance," replied Gilbert, and appeased the guide with his brandy-flask, who said, when he had partially drained it, that the cloud would certainly "break themself in quarter hour."

And in less time than that the clouds began slowly to lift from beneath; dark forms of rock and mountain grew into shape, the shoulder of a high peak came in view, spurs and jagged ridges; then the clouds above dissolved, and there came a glimpse of sky intensely blue, and Ruivo and the solemn heights around him seemed to unveil and rear their heads, and the deep silence made their grandeur as awful as it was majestic. The effect of the slow dispersing of the clouds, bringing into sight first one and then another stupendous shape, made it seem as they were witnessing a new birth of the world. Around rose all the mountain-fortresses of the island, some of them reft from top to base by fathomless ravines, and an ocean of sapphire rolled on every side, with fire-tipped clouds upon its surface. A few moments this scene lay naked and sublime before their eyes, then the cloud-curtain fell again, gray, close, and cold as the mists in the Valley of the Shadow.

"After this," said Marian, in a quiet tone, turning as she spoke to Reade, "I shall better realize the poetry of Job."

They woke the guide and began their descent.

Coming to where they had left the horses in the keeping of guide No. 2 (though the horses were keeping the guide, for he also slept) they mounted, and took a slightly different route from that by which they had ascended. It was the delicatest motion; Marian had to cling to the pommel of her saddle to save herself from falling over the horse's head.

Presently they were scaling the sharp side of one of the lower heights, and Marian's horse was a length in advance of Gilbert's. Passing through a cut in the summit, the horse suddenly reared and pawed the air in terror. He stood with his rider on the brink of a precipice, beneath which the sea spread, two thousand feet below. The lives of horse and woman were in the hand of God.

Marian flung up her hands screaming. Her head reeled, and she fell back half fainting in the saddle. A second, and her foot would have slid from the stirrup and she would have toppled headlong into the sea.

Gilbert, whiter than ashes, dug the spurs into his horse and was beside her. She fell moaning into his arms and was saved. Such a prayer of thanksgiving as men breathe but once or twice in their lifetime glowed on his lips.

She awoke to consciousness, and Gilbert's arms were round her. He bathed her forehead with brandy, and kissed her face and hands, his eyes streaming.

"It is you who have saved me," she said, smiling faintly.

The guides, white almost as the just-rescued girl, chattered under their breath like apes, and said their Lady of the Mount had wrought another miracle.

Gilbert, in a kind of ecstasy of fervor, bared his head and thanked God aloud for the safety of the woman he loved. The guides, not knowing his words, but seeing that he prayed, fell on their knees and told their beads in trembling. Marian lay motionless, and her lips framed in silence after him the words he spoke to Heaven.

All this passed in a few moments, and the tension of the scene was over.

"How shall I ever repay you?" she asked, when, walking beside her, his arm still clasping her, the guide leading his horse by the bridle, they were slowly going on their way again.

Gilbert was silent. There was but one answer he could make, and when she realized it she also became silent. Nothing else was spoken, and by and by they entered under the chestnut groves of Santa Anna.

A fortnight later they were on their way back to England.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

HOME AGAIN.

ENGLAND dawned upon the travelers with the dawn of the August morning. When they went below they had given the stewards and stewardesses the strictest orders to call them as soon as land was sighted. Marian, however, did not need a call from the stewardess. Voices more sympathetic called her through the night. If she had left England with the apathetic senses of one who may live or die, she was returning instinct with higher life, with quickened feelings, with mingling and conflicting hopes and doubts, and wistful forecasts as vague as luminous.

As Marian came on deck the boards were still drenched with the dew and the spray, and the nocturnal curtain of mist still hung lightly over the heaving waters. A ray of the morning sun fell along the deep, penetrating and lighting up the mist, and as she bent her eyes toward the eastern horizon, she heard the officer who was on the bridge exclaim, half mechanically, half gladly, "Land!"

Marian did not sight land so readily as the practiced seaman. Mists hung between sea and sky, and the sun only gradually dissolved them, for land was very near indeed. The good ship was really in the offing of Plymouth Sound, that noble harbor which English mariners have somehow held especially dear for centuries. When full daylight came upon the sea, still subdued, sublime, and intensely beautiful, as it changed from the gray and the green of dawn to the radiant glow of morning, the calm light revealed the perfect picture of the Sound, with its wooded steeps, on the one hand tree-clad to the very edge of the sea, and its limestone heights on the other, overgrown also with verdure sheer down to the margin. Right ahead rose the green Hoe, with its background of picturesque white-fronted mansions. Beyond, the town glimpsed up bright and clear, and in the far distance lay the heights of Dartmoor.

How the heart quickens as it recognizes dear familiar scenes, to which it has silently yearned through long intervals of absence! What does it matter whether the emotions

we cherish most have centered upon broad wildernesses or flowery dells! The heart has no choice but to respond to the influences it has dimly cherished in memory. Those breezy and spreading wastes, and deep coombes dark with foliage, Marian had all-unconsciously sighed for even under the changeless sunshine of Madeira. Now that she saw and knew them she was glad. Before she remembered her surroundings again Mrs. Warren and Gilbert had discovered her.

As the ship steamed buoyantly in by the western channel of the breakwater—her poop alive now with the homecoming passengers—they saw the fishing-fleet bearing up from the south-west, they heard the rattle of ropes and creaking of blocks across the water from the harbor, and they sighted, besides, another steamer, which seemed to be making straight for the breakwater, as she rounded the arm of that gigantic mole. That was the tender from the shore to take them "home," as Marian put it; but they had barely come to anchor before this other steamer was alongside.

Two figures Marian, with a cry of joy, recognized on the deck of the tender: the lieutenant, in his long blue coat, anxiously peering for the first sight of her; and beside him the big frame and fine mahogany countenance of Parson Paul, his hat securely tied down with a party-colored pocket-handkerchief.

"Oh, Uncle Lemuel, I am so glad—so glad to come home!"

"Not more glad, my darling, than I am to welcome you;" and the lieutenant held her to him and let her cry freely down the high collar of his cloak.

Parson Paul shook hands heartily with Mrs. Warren and Gilbert, whom he had never seen before, and said that a room was prepared for Gilbert at the Vicarage at Three Dykes. It had already been arranged that Mrs. Warren should accompany Marian on a visit to the Vineyard.

Gilbert said that it would give him great pleasure to accept Mr. Brunskill's invitation, if he might be allowed to do so in a few days' time. His first duty was in London.

The vicar bade him get through his business and join them at Three Dykes as quickly as possible. By this time they were landed at Plymouth, Gilbert with them, as he had decided to complete the journey by train.

Parson Paul was wearing a new coat, which he very well knew would be wasted on his parishioners. So he proposed they should spend the early part of the day in the town, and start for Three Dykes in the afternoon.

"Streets level here—no climbing," he said to Mrs. Warren, who fell in with the proposal at once, but said it was a pity they had no hammocks in Plymouth.

The vicar did the honors of the town, and spent ten days' income in lunching the party at the Royal Hotel. When the sun was slanting they set out for Three Dykes, and at tea-time they reached the Vineyard.

Home again, for Marian! It was the yellow prime of autumn, when the leaves were melting into gold, and the rose-petals were blown about the grass, and apple-trees were red with the fast-ripening fruit.

"Welcome home, my love!" said the lieutenant, as he kissed his niece, in the porch; "and God be thanked for your recovery!"

Marian shivered a little at those words, for words like them had been spoken in her half-conscious ear a few days before, when death had stared her in the face.

"Oh! there are red roses on my own particular bush," she exclaimed, looking out through the open window. "After tea I shall gather them. Mrs. Warren, come and look at my rose-bush. I planted it myself. It is a Duke of Edinburgh; I have taken three first prizes with it."

"I have one like it in Bayswater," said Mrs. Warren.

How sweet that small garden looked, in its mellow autumn dressing; and the hills beyond, softened by the setting sun! The cloud-wrapped peaks of Madeira were grand, and beautiful the sapphire sea, and wonderful the glory of the flowers spread upon the fields; but the soft loveliness of the garden she had played in from a child was what she had yearned for across the sea.

Home again, and with full strength; hopes renewed, ambitions rekindled. Did she ever think of that scene on the precipice, when Gilbert, with a woman's tears on his face, held her in his arms, and thanked God aloud that it had been given to him to snatch her from death? We have seen that it crossed her mind but a moment ago.

Did she ever think of what she had said to Gilbert then, and of the silence he had given her for answer? Balzac has a line somewhere touching certain words written when

the heart burns within, faithful expressions of a moment of passion or of mental exaltation, *mais non pas le sens général do nos caractères.* It is certain that when she almost bade Gilbert ask what he would of her, she meant it. Suppose, then, he should ask something of her on a day to come?

"My dear, are you not going to take Mrs. Warren to her room?"

"Do not disturb her, lieutenant; I can take my bonnet off here. I would not spoil her first reverie for another cup of—thank you, I will. The milk is better than the Madeira cream. By the way, *was* it cream we had there? I don't remember to have seen a milch-cow in the island."

"I saw one, Mrs. Warren."

"One cow could not supply an island with cream, dear. I must write to the manager of the hotel about it; we may have been almost poisoned the whole time we were in Funchal, without knowing it."

"If there was one cow, there were probably others," said Marian, quitting her seat in the window, and taking her place at the table.

"There may have been, of course; but I did not see them, which is certainly strange. I almost begin to regret that we went there. My first thoughts, you may remember, dear, were of Torquay."

"It is the best watering-place in England," said the vicar. "There's an old fishing fellow there choke-full of the finest smugglers' tales I ever heard. Why, it was touch-and-go with his father once whether the coast-guard would have him! Up the beach and over the rocks like a wild cat, and the bullets singing all the while like Waterloo! Whew! we live in feeble times;" and the vicar relapsed into silence, and fell to contemplating an old fowling-piece of the lieutenant's, which stood, with his walking-stick, in a corner.

"Why, there's a letter of Arnold's on the chimney-piece!" exclaimed Marian, and jumped up to fetch it.

A look of alarm came into the face of the lieutenant, and the vicar, glaring at him with an expression which said "Stupid fellow! what made you put it there under her very nose?" left his seat suddenly, and, on pretense of getting the letter for her, contrived to overturn a whole

pile of letters which stood on the chimney-piece, and, in picking them up, to slip Arnold's into his pocket.

"As odd a disappearance as ever I knew," said the old man, fumbling with the letters on the carpet, and thinking what a conjurer the world had lost in him. "It's no matter," he added, looking up; "I'll have it for you. It has slipped away somewhere here. Take Mrs. Warren upstairs, my dear. If it were not for Lem and me she would have asked for bed half an hour since: she makes an early start with me to-morrow to see the schools."

"Well, I really shall be glad to get into a steady bed again," said Mrs. Warren. "And, Marian, you ought to go too. You know you have not slept three hours together since we left Madeira."

"Away with you both, then," said the vicar. "At least, we'll read prayers first. Where's the Bible, Lem? In the next room? Come, then; we'll go there. Mrs. Warren, by your leave, ma'am;" and with Arnold's letter safe in his pocket, the vicar gave his arm to Mrs. Warren, and led the way to the next room.

After prayers Mrs. Warren went to bed like a lamb, and Marian was persuaded to follow her, but said that when Arnold's letter was found it should be sent up to her.

The vicar and the lieutenant were left together downstairs.

"You will be sixty-one or sixty-two years old come goose-killing time, and you might as well be six or seven. Where are your wits, man?" said the parson to his friend, who was sufficiently crestfallen.

"It certainly was very careless of me," replied the lieutenant; "but what are we to do now? She will be sending down for the letter presently."

"Very good, very good! You have other letters, haven't you? Send her up one of the old ones."

So the lieutenant sent Phœbe upstairs with a letter of ancient date, which Marian returned in a few minutes, with an apology to the vicar for having given him so much trouble; she had read the letter before, she said.

Parson Paul indulged in a wink and another cup of tea.

But the lieutenant looked less content.

"You see, Paul, it can not be kept from her any longer," he said. "Everything must be told now."

"Very well; but it must be done in proper style. You

will tell her yourself, of course?'' replied Parson Paul, who had begun a second tea with an excellent appetite.

"I dare say you could do it a good deal better, Paul," said the lieutenant, wistfully.

"I dare say I could not," answered Paul, swallowing half an egg at a gulp. "But, tut! what are you afraid of? A most miserable business, but no fault of yours."

"I ought not to have taken his money," urged the lieutenant.

"There was no choice. It was life or death. She must either go away or stay at home and die. But what a plague have we to do with talking of this? If she is to be told, she had better be told at once, and you must do it, Lem. I'm three parts minded to do it myself, though, you're such a poor fellow.''

"I wish you would, Paul," exclaimed the lieutenant, eagerly.

"No, I won't; you must do it yourself. Do it to-morrow when I take the old lady in tow. There's more of the soldier about her than there is about you, Lem. Well, good-night to you. What, man! don't look so puny. Here's the child home again as sound as the church—sounder a good deal than mine; and that's the handle you've got to lay hold on when you tell her about it."

"Yes; but poor Arnold, Paul!"

"He's a man; he'll get out of it. I've been hobbled myself before now. The Fleet was standing when I was a youngster. D'ye remember that John Adams I stood surety for to the tune of a hundred and fifty? No, you don't remember anything. Good-night to you. If I thought that fowling-piece of yours wouldn't burst in my hand, I'd go round by the warren."

But though the vicar carried Mrs. Warren off to the schools early the next morning, and there was a clear field till lunch-time, the lieutenant said nothing to Marian of that which sat so near his heart. A week passed, and still he delayed to tell her.

Marian, however, had begun to perceive that something was awry. A cloud hung over the two houses. The vicar, as was generally the case when anything troubled him, was more boisterous than usual; the lieutenant, on the other hand, was grave and silent, almost to taciturnity.

The name of Arnold was never mentioned. No letters

were received from him; there was no talk of his coming to see her on her return; she had not had from him the barest message of welcome.

It was about Arnold, then, that the trouble was—trouble and mystery too. She remembered now the suddenness with which Arnold's name had disappeared from her uncle's letters a few weeks ago, and wondered that she had not thought more of this fact at the time. But the matter must be cleared up instantly.

She spoke to the lieutenant; asked how it was that there were no letters from Arnold, that he had not been to see her, if only for a few hours, since her return, and that neither the lieutenant nor the vicar ever mentioned his name.

The lieutenant's conscience smote him that he had not told his story before it was asked for; but he would evade the telling of it, if possible, even now.

"Yes, yes; it should have been told you before. You ought to have heard it at once, dear," he said nervously, speaking half to himself and half to her.

"Told me before! I should have heard it at once!" she exclaimed. "What do you mean, uncle? Has anything happened to Arnold?"

"The truth is, dear, that Paul, our good friend the vicar, over there, you know, has something to say to you. He ought to have told you earlier. But go to him at once; you will find him at the Vicarage before he goes out."

Away she went, her heart rapping audibly, reproaching herself all the way that she had not had this mystery explained long ago.

"About Arnold, my dear? No; but your uncle Lem, there, he has something to say to you; I wonder at his putting it off so long. A man full of procrastination, about which there is a proverb that no doubt you have often heard, my dear. Go to him at once and say that I am nothing less than astonished. A poor thing this putting off; I'll preach on it."

Back the poor little shuttlecock went, much frightened now, and resolved to begin by scolding her uncle.

But she was baffled again, for when she reached home Mrs. Warren was in close talk with her uncle in the garden, and Mrs. Warren's scene comes first in the order of narration.

CHAPTER XXIX.

HOW IT WAS TOLD HER.

MRS. WARREN had resolved in her heart that Lieutenant Lemuel must be won to the support of her nephew's suit.

Ha! most faithful and doughty lady, are you there? But be sure of your ground, and walk warily. This old soldier is not always as mild as he looks.

She said she had received a letter from her nephew, in which he stated that he hoped to avail himself of Mr. Brunskill's invitation in a few days at latest.

The lieutenant expressed himself happy; he had not yet thanked Mr. Reade properly for the attention he had shown to Marian in Madeira.

Marian had spoken of Mr. Reade? queried Mrs. Warren, innocently. Yes, she had told her uncle how assiduously he had exerted himself for the entertainment of both ladies; indeed, the lieutenant had gathered from his niece's account that Mr. Reade had proved quite a host to them while he stayed in Funchal. "But every one," went on the lieutenant, "has been most kind to her, and you above all, my dear Mrs. Warren."

"No one could be anything but kind to her," replied Mrs. Warren. "She repays kindness an hundred-fold."

"She is, indeed, a very good girl, and has been a most dear niece to me," said the lieutenant.

Mrs. Warren answered that she was certain of it. For her own part she had grown to love Marian like a daughter.

The lieutenant bowed, with evident feeling.

"My only uneasiness on her account," pursued Mrs. Warren, "was the thought that she should be getting back her strength only to waste it again on mathematics after her return to England."

"She is very fond of mathematics," smiled the lieutenant.

"She ought to get married," said Mrs. Warren.

"Eh? Married, do you say, Mrs. Warren? I believe that Marian has never thought of marriage."

"My nephew is very devoted to her," said Mrs. Warren.

Having launched her bolt, and seen that it took surprising effect, Mrs. Warren proceeded to get at once into close quarters. She launched into praise of Gilbert's sterling qualities, his high and faithful character; his passion for Marian, which she knew, for he had told it to her; then touched on his great and growing wealth, and said finally that she had reason to believe Marian was not wholly without regard for him.

The lieutenant's face, while Mrs. Warren was speaking, was a study. He had as little of the mercenary element in him as any man living, and, knowing that Marian had no more of it than himself, he would not have valued Gilbert Reade's proposal a jot higher for his own sake or hers had it been backed by the wealth of Inde.

In fact, he thought neither of Gilbert, nor of his good qualities, nor of his riches. Mrs. Warren's words had hurried into his mind the image of Arnold—Arnold who, he well knew, loved Marian; Arnold who had brought himself to ruin that her life might be saved; Arnold, of whom at this moment he had no knowledge except that he had plunged out of sight in the deeps of London to hide himself and his misfortunes from every one.

What was this stranger that he should propose to marry Marian, on whom another who was no stranger had claims like Arnold's?

Did Marian love Gilbert Reade? The lieutenant prayed it might not be so. She knew nothing as yet of all that Arnold had done for her.

This and more passed through his mind while Mrs. Warren was beseeching his interest in the cause of Gilbert Reade, and when she had finished speaking he was ready with his answer.

He spoke gently and kindly, but quite firmly. He himself and his niece were honored by Mr. Reade's proposal; but though he could not of course speak for her, there were circumstances which made it impossible for him to befriend Mrs. Warren or Mr. Reade in this matter—circumstances which Marian herself was not yet aware of, but of which she must be put in possession at once.

The lieutenant would willingly have gone on to tell the whole story—would, indeed, have told it there and then—but it was at this juncture that Marian, returning in haste from the vicarage, appeared at the garden gate. The

conversation of the lieutenant and Mrs. Warren broke off abruptly, and Mrs. Warren presently left them and took her way into the house.

The concern and affection of the lieutenant for Arnold being now thoroughly roused, he needed no further prompting. Arnold had pledged him to secrecy long ago, but Mrs. Warren's words convinced him that the time for secrecy was past. Marian must know at once in what manner and to what extent she was indebted to Arnold, and judge then whether she would do right to give herself to another. For it seemed to the lieutenant that honor was involved in this, and on the point of honor no man was stricter.

"Niece," he began, using the form of address which he reserved for serious communications, "I have just been apprised by Mrs. Warren that Mr. Reade, her nephew, loves you, and would have you marry him."

"Mr. Reade asked me to marry him, long since, at Madeira," she answered.

"And what did you say to him, niece?"

"I said that I loved no one well enough to become his wife."

This was an answer more to the lieutenant's satisfaction than he had looked for, but he went on:

"I gather, however, from what Mrs. Warren has said to me, that he still loves you, and that you are not without regard for him."

"It is impossible I should be without regard for him, for he has been very kind to me," she said.

"But ought you not to resolve your heart" (how they talk of the heart, these innocent old bachelors!), "and be at an understanding with this gentleman? Mrs. Warren, who has been most kind to us, has been to seek my interest in Mr. Reade's behalf; would have me say that I would willingly see you marry him. I, to be sure, have nothing against this gentleman—far from it, all that I know of him is entirely to his credit; yet something puts it out of my power to say a word for him. And this it is that I have to tell you, niece. How can I be Mr. Reade's supporter when I think of all that you and I owe to Arnold—you, Marian, especially?"

"To Arnold, Uncle Lemuel! What do we owe to Arnold? What do I owe?"

"It is to Arnold, under God, that you owe your life."

It were a feeble metaphor to say that Marian drank the wine of astonishment when these words fell from her uncle's lips.

"My life, Uncle Lemuel! My life! What do you mean?" she gasped.

"Listen, and I will tell you," answered the lieutenant. "You know in what great distress we were last winter, when the doctors ordered you to be sent from England, and I had no means of sending you. They said it was a question of your life or your death; that between these there was no choice; and I saw that it was so. You know how greatly Arnold was troubled, with the rest of us; yet you do not know it as well as I do. Arnold went to town one evening, as you remember, and returned the following night. The day after, he placed two hundred and fifty pounds in my hands, and said it was for your use."

"And you took it from him?"

"Yes, for if your life were to be saved I had no choice else."

"Arnold gave you two hundred and fifty pounds for me, and you took it? But how could Arnold get so much money as that?"

"You must ask me no questions like that, dear," said the old lieutenant, rather nervously. "Be assured, though, that I questioned him as closely as he suffered me, and did not take the money till he had assured me that he did himself no injury in giving it."

"Arnold to plunder himself for me, and you to let him, Uncle Lemuel, and I to know nothing of it! Oh, what a miserable, miserable doing! And his money spent, and—"

"Your health restored, Marian," said the lieutenant, in a pleading tone.

"What is that? What is that? For Arnold has come to some trouble, through me, I know. Tell me, for you must know it, has he not ruined himself for me?"

She stopped him, and laid her hand on his arm and looked full at him with indignation in her eyes.

"This," she went on, before he could reply to her—"this is the mystery there has been about Arnold for weeks past. I know it. You ceased all mention of him in your letters. You did not answer my questions. You

have hardly spoken of him since I came home. He has not been to see me. Uncle Lemuel, what has happened to Arnold, and where is he?"

"He is indeed in great trouble," faltered the lieutenant, "and—and I do not know where he is?"

"Oh! is not this wicked!" exclaimed Marian. "To take his money, to know that his giving it has brought him to ruin; and then to leave him, and say that you can not tell where he is!"

"Niece," said the lieutenant, gravely, "you must not speak like this, for you speak without knowing well what you say. We can not be sure, in the first place, whether or how far his goodness to us has been the cause of his trouble. And do you think that I or his uncle would willingly leave him in distress? Is not his uncle's home his? Would not my home be his if he needed it? It is his own doing that he has ceased to write to us; it is himself who has put it out of our power to write to him. We wrote at first, but he did not answer us. It was his own express wish to be left alone until he had mastered his trouble. He is a good and brave lad."

"You need not tell me that, Uncle Lemuel. But," she went on, impetuously, "it is not right! it is not right! He must not be left alone. You do not know where he is; then you do not know what state he is in, what may have happened to him since he wrote to you last. Uncle Lemuel, you did very wrong to obey him when he told you to leave him to himself. Oh! if I had only known of this before! Tell me exactly what it is that has happened to him, so far as you know it, uncle."

"Mr. Trimble quarreled with him, and has dismissed him; and he has—he has been brought to bankruptcy."

"Oh, horrible! Dismissed and a bankrupt, and his friends listen to him when he says, 'Let me alone.' I have no patience with any of you. But he shall be found now; if no one else finds him, I will go to London and find him myself."

"We shall set about it at once," said the lieutenant. "Perhaps, indeed, we should have set about it earlier, though of that I am not sure, remembering the terms of Arnold's letters. You have spoken a little hastily, my dear Marian, as though I myself had been careless, or even callous, where Arnold's trouble was concerned."

"No, uncle, no; I did not mean that, but—"

"Well, dear, well, it was spoken hotly, out of the warmth and goodness of your heart; and, indeed, I do not hold myself quite free from blame. But of this I am certain, that when Arnold was bent on finding the means whereby you might go to Madeira, nothing would have turned him from his purpose; no refusal on my part would have availed. The help he brought seemed to me nothing less than Heaven-sent. With your life at stake, and no other aid at hand or possible, I dared not refuse it; and I knew besides that Arnold held your recovery dearer than anything else in the world."

"How do you know that, Uncle Lemuel?"

She spoke low, and strangely enough, the thought of what she had bidden Reade ask of her on the brink of the precipice beneath Ruivo rose up again in her mind.

"I know it from what he has said to me; I know it more surely from what he has not said," replied the lieutenant.

"Uncle Lemuel," she said, "let us think of nothing else until we have found Arnold."

"It shall be our endeavor from this moment," he answered.

Parson Paul noted a look on the lieutenant's face that evening, and said, "I perceive, my friend, that the thing has had birth, and not without some throes."

"I have told it to her, Paul," replied the lieutenant.

"And how did the child take it?"

"She is set on one thing above everything else—that Arnold must be found.

"Egad, then, found he must be!" answered Paul.

Late the same evening, a day or two earlier than he was expected, Gilbert Reade arrived at Three Dykes, and, in accordance with Parson Paul's invitation, took up his quarters at the Vicarage.

My friend Gilbert, I am sorry; but I fear this visit is like to disappoint your hopes. It is such a far cry from Pico Ruivo in Madeira to Three Dykes in the West of England; and, besides, a thing has happened.

CHAPTER XXX.

TRANSFORMATION.

"ARNOLD, then, loves me?"

This the thought that cleft its way into her brain and worked there in fiery fashion all day and on into the night. She was in her room alone. It was past ten o'clock, and the house had retired. Phœbe had just been up to tell her that Mr. Reade had arrived and was at the Vicarage. He had sent his love to Mrs. Warren, and his compliments to her, adding that he would not think of disturbing them so late.

"I am glad of it," was on the tip of her tongue, but she suppressed it, and dismissed Phœbe.

The night was soft and sweet-smelling, the fields stretched out asleep in the fresh moonlight, and she had opened her window and sat there in her night-robe.

"Arnold, then, loves me?"

And she stood debtor to Arnold, through no act of her own, without so much as her being privy to the debt; and this debt, it seemed, had brought ruin on him, and he had banished and hidden himself—a situation compounded of the strangest circumstances; a situation greatly perplexing and somewhat galling to one of Marian's mettle.

Useless to try and sleep upon it; so she sat there unquiet and unhappy, a prey to thoughts, suggestions, fears, and chidings the most chaotic. The many-colored drama of the last few months enacted itself again in her uneasy brain.

The swoon at college, which was the opening scene; her head swam again at the thought of it. The return of consciousness, her uncle beside her; the home-coming weak and broken, with the future blotted out. The fiat of the doctors—Go and live, or stay here and die. The quick settlement of the affair, when it had seemed quite hopeless—dull-brain that she was, not to have perceived at a glance that the settlement followed within half a day on Arnold's return from that sudden visit to London! The first meeting with Reade and her mental summing of him up as taciturn and ungentle. Madeira, and the strange, eventful

history of the sojourn there; languid and quick by turns; the glamour of the place itself; then (and still with feelings part resentful, part pitiful, and part sympathetic) Reade's proposal, the second great landmark in her life. His departure and return; their last expedition, and the dizzy terror of the scene on the precipice brink. On this she dwelt long, trying to recall the exact words she had spoken when, on awaking from her faint, she found herself with Gilbert's arms about her. She had been willing to pledge herself to him, and he, with a generosity which few men in his place would have equaled, had refused to let her. He had saved her life. So had Arnold, and in saving it had ruined himself. And Reade loved her, and Arnold loved her. And Reade was here now, come perhaps to ask what he would not ask in Madeira; and Arnold was away, lost in London—if, indeed, London still held him. But Reade, despite his nearness, seemed further from her now than Arnold who was lost. Reade's star declined, Arnold's shed a brighter light from afar.

She put a curious question to herself: Did this that Arnold had done for her, coupled with his love, constitute such a claim upon her that she ought to think herself morally engaged to him already?

She put that question aside, with the answer that no service could exact such reward, unless the heart consented. Was her heart outside of this matter, then?

No, for gratitude welled in it at thought of Arnold sacrificing himself for her; it bled pity at thought of his suffering—untended, alone—in the great gray Babylon.

For a new Arnold was born and grew in her mind that night. She had known a boyish companion, a pleasant friend, her uncle's chosen associate, a welcome guest in her home. But such friends we have all about us, and they are the friends whom we have to abandon with only the shadow of pitying regret. This new Arnold was a sublimer figure; the deed he had done was knightliest of all knightly deeds. It was more than heroic; it seemed to her one of those acts which link the human with the Divine, and breathe through our terrestrial life intimations of its celestial beginnings and its celestial aim.

So when the morning broke, pity and affection had driven out all other feelings and held equal sway. It was,

"Arnold, Arnold, you have done all this for me; you have ruined yourself for me; how can I choose but love you?" And with this she cried herself to sleep, for Arnold's sake.

Never a hastier, hotter thing than the friendship which sprung up between Parson Paul and Gilbert Reade. It rose, like Jonah's gourd, in a night. Some half-score tales of sport and adventure did it. Paul sacrificed three good sleeping hours in his effort to exhaust Reade's recollections of hunting, shooting, fishing, and trapping in all parts of the globe where sport was to be had, and at two o'clock in the morning he had not so much as winked an eye. Piling on fresh logs and fetching in more rations from the dining-room, he vowed that Reade should tell the rhinoceros story again, and as he sat through it, with kindled face, he mourned inwardly the hard fate that had forced him to parson it in a sleepy English hamlet, where a casual rabbit and a very occasional hare were the most unclerical excitements that offered—ghost-laying coming but once in a man's lifetime. But for an interjection here and there, and a crackling of the fingers, he sat like a pyramid through the recital, and "I'd give a hogshead of cider (if I had it)," said he at the conclusion, "if I could hold my Three-Dykers in church like this! Would you believe it, there are seldom above two of them awake when I get in sight of 'Lastly,' and Ann Hanoch, my woman, is one of 'em, and Keturah, the kitchen-girl, is the other. I think I'm too full of Gospel for them; I don't put carnal enough into it."

Now the vicar when he had brooded the matter half a day (thinking much between whiles what a figure he would make standing with smoking rifle over a prostrate elephant) saw that good might be brought out of the boundless friendliness of his visitor. Reade must be made to hunt up Arnold. The good man little imagined what a task he was devising for poor Gilbert; no labor of Hercules had the bitterness of it. But Parson Paul had not been with Gilbert and Marian to the Twenty-five Fountains, nor descended with them from Pico Ruivo.

He told Reade something of the trouble that had befallen himself and his friend the lieutenant, Marian being concerned in it, as he "believed the girl had a sort of feeling for Arnold," though "what sort of a feeling he had never

quite made out." Reade, "a most excellent fellow, might perhaps be able to help them in some way."

Gilbert, without showing any indecent curiosity, replied that his services were quite at the vicar's disposal. Paul shook him by the hand, and took him round to look at the pigs.

Gilbert asked Mrs. Warren what it was all about. She told him as much as she knew; said she wished for his sake that circumstances were happier, but had noticed as a strange fact, during the past ten years or more, that it was always the wrong thing which happened; that Marian was in a state of great distress, and that Gilbert must do whatever she wanted of him.

Gilbert said he could do no less, be the circumstances what they might; and began to perceive that he was destined to play a *rôle,* success in which demands a fair substratum of philosophy.

Toward him—and, indeed, toward the rest (having once spoken out)—Marian was reticent on the subject, though she took no pains to hide her lack of comfort; and showed a wintery, or, at brightest, an autumnal, face amongst her friends.

One could not but notice, though, that she was more tender to Gilbert than to any one else; and as the tokens of tenderness are apt to be mistaken for those of the deeper passion, the poor fellow began to feel himself again on thin provision of hope, thinking that perhaps she had but a sisterly concern for that other one.

Yet in her eyes, when they fell on him, there was often a kind of yearning pity, with even something of regret; and once, when he spoke a low word in her ear, as they walked in the shadow of the elms at sunset, she smiled sadly, and shook her head, and said, "You should have been less generous on the rock above the sea that day."

She wrote urgent letters, but received no replies.

Every night, when Paul and his guest had returned from the Vineyard, or when the Vineyard party had quitted the Vicarage, the parson marched Gilbert into the study, set him in his own chair, and called for a fresh narrative of sport.

Gilbert's store was inexhaustible. "Put but the half of

it on paper, and you might fill volumes!" exclaimed Paul, and looked with a meditative air at his book-case, as though considering what theological set he could most easily dispense with, to make room for Gilbert's sporting reminiscences.

Gilbert returned from a solitary stroll one morning, and, nearing the Vicarage, saw the parson coming home from his round in the village.

"A badger!" shouted Gilbert, at the top of his voice.

"Eh! What? Where?" and the vicar's gray eye ranged the fields on either side of him.

"A mile away, up there in the coppice on the hill."

"Ugh!"

They walked in company toward the Vicarage, and fell to talking of Arnold. But the vicar's thoughts were full of badger.

"Where did you say you found him?" he asked presently, when Gilbert had clean forgotten pig.

"In the coppice on the side of the hill."

"Ah! A likely place. Did you—hum! no, you didn't, of course."

"I had no dog with me."

"You had no dog with you. It was well. A good beast, for all the abuse he's had."

"Vermin, you know, vicar; sheer vermin."

"So the gamekeepers say; but the rascal has his uses."

"Killing foxes, for example," quoth Reade.

"Well, maybe a fox here and there. Yet I've known badger and fox lodge in the same earth. But Reynard's too dirty for him."

"He kills moles, too."

"The mole's a nuisance. Away with moles! No moles for me."

"Well, let badger bide," said Reade. "What were we talking of, vicar?"

"This nephew of mine, Arnold, the poor boy. You know what a stew we're in about him. Marian, poor girl, quite upset. And the foolish thing is that we've no idea where he is. Burrowed away somewhere in London. Burrowed, eh? Badger again. I think you said you had no dog with you?"

"I had no dog with me. Well, how am I to help you, vicar? You know that any trouble of Miss Dean's—that is,

I mean I shall be only too glad to be of service to any of you."

"A good fellow, Reade; you have the heart in the right place. So have I; but when it comes to an affair like this, I want nose. Now, if you have nose as well as heart you may do wonders for us. You may scour London."

"Eh, sir!"

"I mean you might make an inquiry or two. You know every one in London, I dare say, and no doubt every street, too. Was the brute well grown?"

"The finest badger I ever saw. I've hunted them in America, too."

"You have! Are the Yankee badgers good sport?"

"I've had better with the English."

"I believe you! It wants a game dog to tackle him. But I'll draw no more badgers, I."

They all lunched together at the Vicarage, and Paul maintained throughout the meal what was for him an uncommon degree of silence. He seemed full of some private matter, eyed the dog frequently, and felt his jaw every time he threw him a scrap.

It was a formidable jaw enough; the dog's nearest relative was probably the lurcher; the vicar had had him as a pup from a noted poacher, who had thought thus to curry favor with the poacher's arch-enemy. A sharp, snappish dog, plenty of weight, a huge head and shoulders, stealthy ways, an observant eye, and a lurking gait that made wayfarers chilly about the calves. Altogether, as Paul thought, a dog that might be trusted to do his duty in a warm corner.

The vicar debated the matter in his heart. "Reade is evidently bent on drawing this badger. Shall I humor him? As he's my guest, I almost think I ought to. And the more I humor him the better disposed he will be, and the more likely to help us find Arnold—poor boy."

Whence it appears the Rev. Paul could on occasion do his little stroke of casuistry.

"There'll be good moonshine to-night," observed the vicar, at about seven o'clock in the evening. Two hours later the moon rode high in a cloudless sky, with just a fine-spun veil of mist over her face.

"Nice night for a stroll," the vicar called from his study to Reade, whose boots were crunching the gravel outside.

"And for a badger," replied Gilbert, laughing in his heart, for he had observed that the brother to the lurcher had been kept on short commons all day.

"I'll draw no more badgers, I," said Paul; "but I'll take a turn through the fields with you if you're disposed."

"Come along, sir. Shall we take the dogs?"

"Well, well; but we'll need to keep them close to heel. This big brute here doesn't seem to have had his fill to-day; he's snarling like a jackal."

"I hope he'll meet no badger," said Reade.

"There'll be a badger the less at sunrise if he does," muttered Paul.

They took the path through the field which led direct to the coppice on the hill.

"It is ten to one we meet him on the prowl," said Reade.

"Meet who?" answered the vicar, careless of grammar under an excitement he could barely control.

"The gentleman with the pointed muzzle."

"Oh! I thought you meant some poacher."

"He's as arrant a poacher as any of them."

The dogs began to sniff, and give out other tokens of excitement. Running alongside Scraper, the lurcher's brother, was the fox-terrier whose acquaintance we made in the first chapter of this story, a very business-like dog, who could run a rabbit pretty close in the open.

They had scarcely set foot on the hill when Scraper, with the terrier at his heels, broke away at full speed in the direction of the coppice. The vicar, panting like a steam-engine, laid a hand on Reade's shoulder, and forcing him behind a tree, whispered hoarsely:

"D'ye see him?"

"No!" said Reade. "Where?"

"*There!*" Pianissimo, which gave a terrible emphasis to the word.

Following the line of the vicar's trembling finger, Reade saw the badger crouched behind a big stone far up the hill. He had heard, if not seen, the dogs, and their yelping paralyzed him. In a second Scraper would have been at him, but in that second the badger recovered his wits, and shot into the earth three feet distant.

"He's gone!" said Reade. "Let him alone; he's a good beast," and laughed in his sleeve.

"He's a thief and a rascal!" cried the vicar.

"He lodges in the same earth with foxes," said Reade.

"He'd kill every fox in the county!" exclaimed Paul.

"We'll let him lie," said Reade.

"We are no men if we do!" retorted the vicar, and bounded up the hill, Reade after him.

Beautiful now to see how the parson, the original Nimrod rampant in every inch of him, kept Reade in hand.

"Put the terrier into the earth; no, not Scraper; we'll want him outside. I know to a foot where the rogue will come out. There's another earth higher up."

But piggy, burrowing like a file, with the terrier at his tail, drove a passage clean through fresh soil, and came out some yards behind the men. He would have escaped into a neighboring earth had not Scraper heard him pattering down the hill. A moment later he was after him, and flinging himself against the sturdy beast just as he was rising at a hillock, managed to overturn him and they rolled over together. It was bite for bite now, and at this game the powerful dog was no match for the badger, who made terrible play with his teeth.

"His chest, you fool, his chest!" shouted the vicar (mercy on us! the bishop nine miles away in his study had need have his ears plugged with tow), for Scraper was tearing in vain at the badger's impenetrable neck. With a despairing yelp he drove at the softer skin of the chest, ripped it, fastened there, and the badger, with teeth uncovered, and eyes red and fierce in death, snarled his last, and gave over.

The vicar pulled off his hat and wiped his head and face and neck.

"A magnificent pig!" said the vicar. "He'd have killed every fox in the county."

"There's not a doubt of it," answered Reade, and laughed inwardly.

And they went home, and the vicar slept with an easy conscience.

"What are you looking so glum about?" said he to the lieutenant the next morning. "We shall find the lad now in a twinkling. Reade's going to help us. I let him draw a badger last night, to humor him. He's ours, heart and soul. I never saw a man so much excited in my life. The finest badger, too, I ev— I tell you Reade's going to town to hunt up our Arnold for us."

CHAPTER XXXI.

HEMLOCK.

"BUT there is a question of duty in it, if there were no other question," she said.

"Stands duty first—or love?" he answered.

They sat on the broad seat built against the trunk of the copper-beech in the dimmest corner of the garden. She wore a pale yellow dress, which Gilbert had once said mated best with her color, and dangled her straw hat by its ribbon. Gilbert's face was that of a man who waits for a sentence he has schooled himself to receive.

"Stands duty first—or love?" he said again, for she had not answered him.

"Ah! my friend," she broke out impetuously, "you do not know all that he has done for me. It is to him I owe my recovery from sickness—my life. He was poor; he raised a great sum of money—how or where I do not know—he forced my uncle to take it, that I might go abroad. He is now in some great trouble, and I, as I believe, am the cause. Do you think this is nothing to me? He has broken with Mr. Trimble, who had such great faith in him; he has disappeared, none of us know where he is, he does not write to us, he sends us no message. Oh! it would have been better I should never have got well than that he should have ruined himself for me. If you love me as you say you do, you must help me to find Arnold."

It is in this fiery way they test the men who love them.

"I am to find him for you that you may reward him by marrying him," said Gilbert, quietly and without anger, merely that she might see the matter as he saw it.

"You must help me to find Arnold."

It was all her answer; she had none else to make. Pity for him she could feel, but for herself she knew no regret in resigning him. She looked away from him as she spoke, she did not see him. Arnold and Arnold only; and it was not now the dictate of duty she obeyed.

Gilbert rose and took a step in the direction of the house. Love wounded and cast away whispered it was not a man's part to do this bidding of hers.

"Then let me be no man for once," he answered back; and turning about, said to her, "I shall do what you ask me."

"Yes," she faltered, "I know that you will; for you are truer than most men, and have no taint of selfishness; but—you think that I am cruel, do you not?"

"You know," answered he, "that it is yours to command, and that I am only to obey. I think nothing."

"Ah! but you do: *tell* me what you think."

"No. If I have any thought at all, I would not tell it. That—for the moment at any rate—is more than should be asked. If I said one thing, you would answer that I spoke out of bitterness; if I said another, you might feel that I tried to be magnanimous at the expense of truth. But I will find your lover for you. That, I think, from one in my position, should count something for devotion."

He touched her hand lightly and left her.

He went back to the Vicarage and found the vicar physicking a sick hen in the porch, with his hat on the ground beside him full of bait for fishing.

"When I have doctored this hen," said Paul, "I'll take you to the river. This nice damp air smells of a flood; we shall have a chance to-day."

"I have no rod with me," said Reade, feeling that the best trout in the pool would jump in vain for him that day.

"I'll lend you my own," answered Paul. "I can borrow John Finch's."

"No; I won't fish to-day, vicar. The air has dried, and there'll be sun enough to bake the fish in an hour. I have been thinking that if I am to be of any help to you in this matter we've been talking about, the sooner I begin the search the better. I propose to return to town to-morrow."

"It's a month sooner than I'd have you go," returned the parson. "Here, you, Keturah, put this hen in a basket in the kitchen, and have a care for her, remembering that the males of this feather were sacred to Æsculapius—I think a week hence would be soon enough."

"Tu kill un, please, sir?"

"Kill what? The hen? I'll look into the history of this girl's family one day; there must have been some Ehud amongst them a generation or two back. I say, Reade, I think a week hence would be quite time enough."

"No, by your leave, vicar, I think the sooner the better."

"Well, you'll find him in a day or two, I make no doubt, and then you'll bring him down yourself, you know."

It is perhaps due to Parson Paul to say that he was entirely ignorant of what had transpired between Reade and Marian. He had a fine instinct for keeping clear of other people's concerns, except where they touched him in his clerical capacity. As for love, he was a sworn old bachelor, and mocked like Momus at the notion that two young people of opposite sex could not be near each other for a month without one of them being brought to a declaration.

Gilbert said he certainly hoped to meet the vicar again, and as it was evident he had made up his mind to return to town at once, Parson Paul gave over pressing him to remain. "Lem ought to be very grateful to me for this," said he to himself. "It was the badger that did it."

Gilbert Reade took his fate like a good soldier of fortune. Men swallow the hemlock every day with as good grace as Socrates, and no admiring circle of friends around to sweeten the cup with their praise. Just at first, to be sure, one is a little doubtful as to the wisdom of the poet that "'Tis better to have loved and lost," etc., but to take the stroke without visible muscular contraction is something.

He would not play the cynic, which is the cheapest *rôle* of all; and when he tried how far he could succeed in working himself into an honest anger, he found it easier to turn the tables on himself with the reasonable argument that his defeat was partly the result of his own quixotic chivalry. If he had asked her to marry him when they were quitting the precipice on whose brink his arm had stayed her from death, she would have said "Yes." But it was he who had made "the great refusal" then, and for what followed—well, there is a plant which blossoms but once in a hundred years, and shall a woman twice offer herself to a man in shorter time than that?

The world is hard on a man who fails, raps him over the cheek-bone, and tells him such a one as he could never have hoped to succeed. But something of respect is the due of those who drink the cup with steady lip, and ask no applauding witness to their courage. Let Gilbert Reade take this due, for it is his.

He told stories to the vicar that night till delighted wonder stiffened the old man's beard; and at the end, bringing his hand with an echoing thwack on the arm of his chair, he exclaimed, "Your excitement's catching, vicar! you fire me! I'll turn globe-trotter again, and see some more sport before I die."

"By the red skin of Esau! if they'd give me another fifty pounds a year, I'd hire a curate and go with ye!" answered Paul.

"Stuff, gentlemen, both! You, Gilbert Reade, know well enough that you will never again let sea divide you from the woman who holds your heart. As for you, Paul, you would merit a fate worse than Jonah's, if you left those few sheep of yours in the wilderness of Three Dykes for all the tigers in Bengal and all the deer in Africa. To bed with you both! you have drunk too much cider!"

"So you are going, dear Gilbert," said Mrs. Warren to him the next morning. "I can say nothing, except that I have failed most terribly. I don't know how it is, but sinbe I lost my copy of 'Hervey's Meditations,' nothing that I take in hand seems to prosper. I bought it at a bookstall in a short street near the Strand, where, if you are ever passing, you might be able to procure me another copy."

"My dear aunt, all that could be done you have done; but," he added with a smile, "it appears that these things are not to be managed by diplomacy."

When Marian said good-bye to him before he left in the evening, she said it rather timidly, but the frank kindliness of Gilbert's manner comforted her.

"Oh! you are very good," she said. "You are like one of the strong, true-hearted knights of the days that were."

Now this was rather an unfortunate comparison, but Gilbert forbore to say that when the knight went forth to do his lady's bidding, he looked, on his return, for the guerdon of her hand.

He said, however:

"Those knights you speak of had with them mostly some token of their princess's regard, which they counted also for a charm against evil by the way. There is no evil likely to befall me but the evil of a rather heavy spirit, for you know I shall not be able to forget you just yet. Have you any charm against an evil like that?"

"I have the charm the old woman gave me at Santa Cruz," she said, drawing out of her dress a queer little figure carved in the wood of a camphor-tree. "Will you take that?"

"We had a quarrel on the day that this was given you," said Gilbert.

"Yes; but we had made it up before I had this."

He took it from her with a smile and bade her good-bye.

The lieutenant and Paul walked with him on the road till Job overtook them with the coach.

"Mr. Reade is a gentleman of a very fine nature, Paul," said the lieutenant, when they had seen the last of him. The lieutenant, you may remember, knew something more than the vicar.

"Tut! What do you know of him?" exclaimed Paul. "Has he told you of the grizzly that tried to swallow his rifle? The man hasn't shown his heart to *you*."

"I fancy poor Mr. Reade has a great deal of regard for Marian," said the lieutenant.

"Gammon! D'ye think the whole world has a heart for the chit? Why, this Reade is a fellow who thinks no more of leveling an elephant than I do of potting a rabbit. Is that a man to fall in love with women?"

The next evening Gilbert went to dine at one of his clubs, and going up the steps was met full tilt by an airy young gentleman with a superfluity of shirt-front and hat-brim, who was coming down. It was our friend the poet. Dick knew everybody, and Gilbert was an old acquaintance.

"If I were given to betting," was Gilbert's greeting, "I would lay twenty to one that your Cousin Joseph has a dinner party this evening. Cousin Joseph's dinners, Dick, are the only appointments I ever knew you in a hurry for."

"You are right, most sapient globe-trotter," said Dick. "I have a ballad to write for to-morrow, and Cousin Joseph's soup-tureen is my Castalian Fount."

"Stay here and dine with me," said Gilbert! "I want to talk to you."

"If you'll send your card down to the cook, I will," replied the poet. "You're the only member of the club the cook serves with a decent dinner."

"Take this with my compliments to the cook," said Gil-

bert, giving his card to the hall porter, "and say Mr. Bell dines with me."

During dinner, Gilbert let fall the name of Arnold.

"Hullo! do you know Lee?" said Dick.

"No; but I know some friends of his in the country."

"Ah! The Three Dykes menagerie?"

"Yes. You seem to know Lee."

"I? I have been his greatest benefactor. We chummed in chambers, and I fed him on kidneys and claret till his wits improved so that his boss made him manager and doubled his screw. Then he took to beafsteak and beer, and lost the berth at once. The stomach is everything. If I could have trained Lee for twelve months on the artichoke soup of Cousin Joseph's cook, he'd be on his way to the woolsack now."

"He's rather under the wind at present, isn't he?" said Gilbert.

"It has spread him flat, poor devil."

"Where is he?"

"I can tell you where he was."

"What's the use of that? I want to know where he is."

"Where's Homer?"

"In the shades."

"So's Lee."

"Do you mean that you have lost sight of him?"

"Yes; he has given me the slip. He's given all of us the slip."

"Give me his last address."

"Robert Street, Bedford Row."

"That will do. I'll find him from that."

"If you do, I'll give you as good a dinner as this."

"A bargain!"

But poet Dick was never called on to pay that score, for Gilbert's quest was fruitless. One may lie close enough in the shades of London if one wills it; and Arnold was resolved to lie as close as ever unfortunate wight had lain. This was the reason that Gilbert failed to find him.

CHAPTER XXXII.

AT THE RESTAURANT PARISIEN.

On a chill gray night in mid-September, the stars, all fringed with mist, shone feebly over the wet roofs of London. It was mist above, it was fog below, and the dank and steaming streets were almost blotted out.

The night-birds of the city crept from the corners where, like Parson Paul's badger, they had slept through the day, shook their frowsy wings, and flitted here and there in search of food or prey.

An old yellow moon struggled through the clouds, peered half-contemptuously on the sooty town, and went in again.

The men who sell food and drink through the hours when four fifths of London is asleep trundled out their barrows and gathered stray coppers from belated pedestrians and those whose business is 'twixt night and morning.

The genius of the sleeping city watched it from his cloud-eyrie; and so, on the dripping pavement, with an occasional lapse into tobacco, did the policeman.

In the sloping attic of a fifth-rate French restaurant in Soho, a candle that stood much in need of snuffing threw a wan light over bare walls and an uncarpeted floor. A small round table, covered with writing materials, was in the center of the room, and a man who had been writing there lay half across it and slept like a stone.

The jaw had fallen slightly, and the lips were just parted. The skin of the face and neck had a grayish tinge, which came something short of pallor, but spoke of meager rations, bad air, haggard anxiety, and, in a word, of life supported on a consumptive purse.

Is this Arnold? If it be not he, it is his ghost in poor condition. It is Arnold.

Noting him and his surroundings, one has not far to seek for some, at any rate, of the motives that impelled, and still impel, him to hide himself from the sight and knowledge of his friends.

He is a wanderer now in the labyrinth of London; and such wanderers, if they have fallen from even so modest

an estate as we saw Arnold in at the opening of this story, are seldom anxious to reveal their whereabouts. In this labyrinth, whose passages and chambers are without number, there are worse retreats than Arnold found; still, a twelve-foot attic in a shy French restaurant in Soho is hardly the abode in which one cares to receive one's friends.

"Snuff me this candle, please!" as Heine's Moses Lump used to say to his snuffers-woman; but here there is no snuffers-woman, and I see no snuffers. He sleeps on. I think this candle will go out. It would be a pity, for it warms the room.

Within a very short time of his bankruptcy, Arnold began to find Robert Street too aristocratic and costly a quarter for a gentleman in his position—a gentleman, to speak more precisely, who had no position at all. He cast about for a less extravagant lodging, and, getting into conversation over a bowl of *bouillon de bœuf* with the madame of the little Restaurant Parisien in Greek Street, one afternoon, he learned that he could rent a furnished *appartement* there for three and sixpence a week. He removed his belongings, a piece at a time, from Robert Street, paid his bill and settled down in the colony of the clock-makers, the barbers, and the *blanchisseuses*. And having done this, he perceived the necessity of making a fresh start in life.

How the man sleeps! What is the good of a truckle-bed if you are going to abuse the table in this way? It creaks under his weight, too. The candle struggles on gamely.

The circumstances of his bankruptcy had put it out of his power to practice in his profession. His years of study in the narrow grooves of the law, his cleverly passed examinations, his time of drudgery, his brief season of managership, his ability to enter at once into practice for himself, all this became of no avail the moment the registrar dismissed him uncertificated; and so long as Mr. Trimble held out against him there was no possibility of retrieving the position he had lost.

The law having cut him, he cut the law, and with it his connection with all the friends and acquaintances who had been associated with his professional life. When a man

drops out of his sphere, his past associates ask what has become of him, are sorry to miss him; and, finding that he does not return, fill up his place and hardly remember his name. Arnold need not have troubled himself greatly as to the conjectures of his friends respecting his disappearance, for all such conjectures are generally short-lived.

It would not forward the story, and would be no particular kindness to Arnold, to return from this point, and follow him step by step through the sharpest period of his misfortunes. For three weeks or a month he had just as much food as sufficed to keep him continuously on the path in search of work.

It is an odd thing how the man in low water never does meet with work, and in those few weeks Arnold had been as close to low water mark as it is possible to get and not starve outright.

It is a period which lends itself to picturesque treatment on paper, when one is writing the life of a man of letters, but a miserably sordid time in reality, and the picturesqueness is gone when one remembers how common the experience is.

Arnold took to journalism, of course; that being, with the exception of law, the only trade he knew anything whatever about. It is not a profitable calling at the best of times; it is a desperately hungry calling when one begins, as Arnold had to begin, at the lowest rung of the ladder.

Up to this time, as he now perceived, he had been the merest amateur. An occasional article on a subject he was familiar with, and for the insertion and payment of which he could afford to wait, had represented the sum of his achievements. But occasional articles on legal topics are not the bread by which a man may live. He wrote articles on other subjects, but they were not wanted. Sometimes they were returned to him, sometimes they were not; but it was of no consequence, for they would not sell. Evidently he had got on to the wrong track at the very outset.

He went to a city news-room one morning, read through one paper after another, and in the course of this exercise it dawned upon him that a daily newspaper is not a literary affair at all. The amount of space devoted to literature pure and simple was, as Arnold perceived, hardly worth taking into account. To the young man of literary feelings (a bad stock-in-trade for a journalist, if they be his all)

it appeared that most of the columns were filled with matter which the intelligent reader would skip. But clearly these were the wares that were wanted, and presumably they were paid for, which was certainly not the case with ornate essays, neatly and laboriously penned, of a literary or speculative cast. Indeed, one editor, in returning a contribution of this sort, went out of his way to scrawl a line in pencil on the back of the manuscript, inquiring whether the author seriously supposed that readers of a daily paper were capable of digesting "this kind of thing"?

In his critical examination of the "leading organs of public opinion," Arnold noted how large a share of space was appropriated to common and more or less trivial incidents of the daily life of the town, such as street brawls, sudden deaths, mad dogs, suicides, falling chimneys; "casualties" in the streets, in the docks, on the river; bursting boilers, vestry meetings; "singular discoveries" in drains, sewers, back-kitchens, graveyards, and water-butts; and wondered who were the purveyors of this curiously varied intelligence.

In due time he fell in with one of them at the news-room, a weedy reporter, attached to no paper but hanging on to a dozen, who, having taken a first-class at Oxford, had subsequently developed into a first-class failure in London.

This jackal of the press scraped a thin living in the by-paths of the craft. There are plenty of university men doing this sort of work, and doing it badly. He was known in every newspaper-office in Fleet Street, and was a familiar object outside the cashier's box, soliciting five shillings on account. He was known, too, at Cogers Hall, where, on the nights of a warm debate, he spoke pungently on one glass of whisky, and brilliantly on three. On Sundays he reported Mr. Spurgeon's sermons for a religious journal. He sponged on Arnold for a week, found that Arnold's purse was on the whole the leaner of the two, and sheered off.

But Arnold had learned a thing or two from him, and turned his knowledge to account. He, too, became a jackal, and found that the jackal was able to keep the wolf from the door. But no ambitious hopes were compatible with his new calling. He must cast away ambition, or make up his mind to starve. He let ambition go, and saw that it was possible to live.

"My friend, you sleep too heavily. This noiseless sleep of yours has the look of stupor; I am three parts minded to rouse you."

"Let me alone; I have worked harder than you to-day."

The candle has a spasm and dies. The moon, grown whiter, turns sentinel in its place, and a pair of mice scamper out from the hole by the fireplace: no cheese-parings here, gentlemen.

The seamy side of letters has been painted to weariness. It has been a favorite subject for the sickly sentimental brush, from Johnson's time onward. Why, one does not clearly perceive. There is as much poetry about a needy grocer as about a needy journalist. The one has failed to find his market; so has the other. They both find it in time, or, if they be men, take another trade.

Few ills belong exclusively to the literary calling; and as for poverty, she is the "midwife of genius" and the founder of the fine arts.

Arnold was frequently hungry; but a little hunger is good for the imagination, and the digestive powers of sedentary men are not adapted to a gross diet. Bacon is bad for the fancy, so are sucking-pig and cream. Anacreon wrote his odes on raisins, and Newton thought out gravitation on bread and water.

The Restaurant Parisien breathed an easy Bohemianism which was not ungrateful to the lungs of our sturdy bankrupt. He maintained a resolute stoicism and something of cheerfulness besides, and had no need to hide his poverty where all were poor alike. The Belgian count with the white poodle, who lodged on the ground-floor, and was without visible means of subsistence, snapped his fingers in the face of the world every morning when he came down to breakfast, and called for half a bottle of red wine at sixpence with an air that would have made Rabelais embrace him. The gay barber who came in from the next street at half-past twelve, humming Mozart, and dined sumptuously for one-and-twopence, was one of the wealthy patrons of the establishment, and had a napkin laid beside his plate.

Madame was a little, eager, black-eyed woman from Provence, who became at once the mother of every one who praised her husband's cooking. Monsieur had quite the air of the old French *noblesse*, and would have passed

readily for a marquis out of repair. He was fond of coming up from the kitchen of an evening to tell you how he had served in the queen's employ at Windsor, but one never gathered distinctly whether monsieur had offended the queen or the queen had offended monsieur. One was disposed to accept the latter of these conclusions, for he cooked as one who had true culinary genius.

At the Restaurant Parisien you might live less cheaply while you seemed to live more than luxuriously. The gourmands of the house called for three dishes, and paid a fraction under a shilling. One had his *plat du jour* for fourpence, his *rôti* for sixpence, and his *légumes* for a penny. *Bouillon de bœuf, ragout de mouton, cotelette,* and *marlan au gratin* have a distinguished look upon paper; but monsieur served them all piping hot, upon clean plates, for half the cost of a beggarly uncooked meal at the English dining-room over the way.

You rubbed shoulders with Rossinge,, the barber; Jean the laundry-man; Nicole, the bookbinder; Edouard, the little working jeweler, and François, the toymaker; and monsieur and his family and the waiter sat down together at the next table; but they were a lively company, and uncommonly polite.

In the evening old Emile Sandeau, the white-bearded cigar-merchant, used to come in and tell fortunes over his cigar and bottle of burgundy, and monsieur and the barber discussed the chances of another revolution.

Arnold was made welcome of this place and its habitués.

Celine, the four-year-old heiress of monsieur, who used to twitter Parisian ditties to herself up and down the house, fell in love with him, and when he had finished his dinner of an afternoon pushed out her pretty little lips and demanded *un baiser*, which he found a very good sort of dessert.

Arnold began to think that if the supply of street casualties, fires, falls of house, extraordinary appearances in the sky at midnight, and so on, would but hold out, he might save money enough, before his hair turned gray, to settle accounts with Mr. Trimble. But if Marian could have put her head in at the door of the attic (the chinks in it were wide enough to peep through, for that matter) she would have been more impatient than ever with poor Gilbert Reade for not having run him to earth before.

A clash of hoofs and wheels woke the brooding streets, and Arnold also. He went hurriedly to the window and looked out, just as a fire-engine disappeared round the corner. Glancing over the neighboring roofs, he saw a wide glare in the sky, painted against a background of fog.

"I'm in luck to-night," said he, and, buttoning up his coat, he groped about for his hat. There was half a French roll ornamenting the chimney-piece (the only ornament it had), and he pocketed it, and made for the door.

It was tender work going down-stairs in the dark, but Arnold knew all the gaps, and reached the bottom unhurt. The count's poodle growled when he was unfastening the street door; but the count, in muffled tones, bade him "again sleep yourself," and Arthur slipped out, and ran in the direction of the red beacon.

There is no need to follow him closely; it is enough to say that he was out on duty. When he quitted the fire he went as fast as he could to Fleet Street, which is far from slumberous at that slumberous hour, but throbs from end to end responsive to the groaning of the printing-engines. He entered one newspaper-office after another, had a brief colloquy with sub-editors, up to their eyes in telegrams and miscellaneous literature, and left a morsel of manuscript with each. Then he put out again for home, easy in the assurance that he had provisioned himself for a week by two hours' unimaginative labor. The day was beginning to grow, and the cats and policemen, in unequal numbers, had the streets to themselves.

It is curious to walk the city at this unconscious hour, wrapped in the stillness of the desert or the middle ocean; to hear the echo of one's footfall amongst the silent, solid houses; to watch the shadows slowly falling as the curtain of the night is gathered back across the sky, and the stars show faint and fainter; to catch the distant sound of carts rolling in over the bridges, with their load of vegetables for the markets; to taste the clear, unsullied breath of day; to note the rare beginnings of the sun; to think on the dreams of the horizontal millions around.

Arnold recalled another walk he had taken months before, not through autumnal streets, but through wintry fields, with his pockets lined with Bank of England notes, and his heart light with hope; but the comparison was not

one to be sustained with any degree of comfort, and he dropped it, and improved his pace.

He was leaving the Strand behind, when he came plump on that ubiquitous young votary of the muses, his friend Dick Bell, who had apparently turned out in full evening dress to seek inspiration from the early skies. There was, however, a ruddy tinge in his cheek and a brightness in his eye which looked as if they might be the effect of a prolonged and agreeable supper-party. Arnold had not seen him for long, and would willingly not have met him now; but it would have been churlish not to respond to the frank delight with which the poet greeted him.

"Eureka!" shouted Bell, and danced on the pavement.

"What are you doing here at this time of day?" said Arnold.

"Looking for a kind policeman to put me in the track for home. And you, where are you going, you owl?"

"Home, too."

"I'll take you there."

"I can't give you a bed, you know," said Arnold.

"Bed! Who wants bed? It'll be daylight in ten minutes. I want breakfast."

There had been a supper-party assuredly, for if Bell had had all his senses about him he was too good a fellow by far to thrust himself on an old friend, who was clearly in no state to play the host. Arnold, with his sunken cheeks, his seedy coat, buttoned to the chin, his weary limbs, and everything sad and forlorn about him, wished Dick or himself a thousand miles away. But there was a grim sort of humor in the situation, and he laughed, and said:

"Come along! I'll breakfast you as you haven't breakfasted for a twelvemonth!"

They traversed Garrick Street, and Arnold piloted the poet in the direction of Soho. Dick, sprightly as if he had just tubbed after passing the night like a Christian, between the sheets, babbled of a hundred things—the supper, the club, poetry, and the meanness of the Government in not improving his salary. He took it as a part of the fun when they stopped at the little shame-faced restaurant, and the door was noiselessly opened by Arnold. It was daylight now, and monsieur, in his cook's cap and apron, was picking his way down the stairs.

Bell recovered himself a little when Arnold ushered him

into the bare room at the top of the house, where the wreck of the tallow-candle stood on the table, and the counterpane was still stretched over the bed. He felt a twinge of shame, and turned as if to apologize to Arnold. But Arnold broke in with a laugh:

"Well, old chum, here we are; these are my diggings! But you want breakfast; open the cupboard there."

The cupboard-door stood ajar; Bell pushed it open. A stone jar labeled "Ink" was its only furniture.

Dick felt the blood hot in his cheeks; he had never been so much ashamed in his life before. He had exposed an old friend in his poverty, and he turned his wet eyes and grasped Arnold by the hand.

"My dear fellow," said Arnold, "it is my fault, I shouldn't have let you come."

"No; I am a sneak, a cad!" exclaimed Dick. "I might have known that you were under the wind, and didn't want me. It's all the fault of that last glass of champagne. I'll never drink a last glass of champagne again as long as I can rhyme."

"My dear Dick, don't be a fool. The cupboard's empty—what of that? I don't need to keep stores as we used to do, for I can go down-stairs and order a string of dishes as often as I've nothing better to do. This, my dear child, is the Restaurant Parisien, with a better cook than your club can boast."

But Dick continued to upbraid himself. Arnold's cheerfulness was a sham, any one could see that. His face was pinched and shrunken, his clothes were barely decent; his attic had the stamp, not of poverty, but of want.

"I'll tell you what it is," said Dick. "You must come out and breakfast with me, and then we'll talk about getting you out of this place."

"I never breakfast away from home," laughed Arnold. "Can't spare the time. See no visitors at all till after midday. Besides, I'm bound to let the house have all my custom."

"Then we'll breakfast down-stairs," said Dick. "But first let's sit down and talk."

He was on the point of saying that his friend Reade was scouring all London in search of Arnold, but thought he had blundered enough for the present, and held his peace on that subject.

Arnold was genial and tolerably communicative, but Dick felt very much as if he were visiting a friend in the condemned cell, and when a comfortable smell of fry arose from the lower regions, he jumped up and said he must have breakfast.

They went down, and the appearance of Dick in full toilet, and looking by no means as if he had been up all night, created quite a stir. The count, who breakfasted in dishabille, left his coffee and disappeared, calling softly on a whole calendar of saints, and emerged presently with shaven cheeks, in which condition he was seldom seen before three in the afternoon. Celine went and fetched her playfellow, the toy-maker's daughter, to come and look at the Milor Anglais, who had arrived, dressed like the head-waiter at the Café Royal, to breakfast with Monsieur Lee on her father's cutlets and claret.

"A man might know worse viands than these," said Dick. "I could write, not an ode, perhaps, but certainly a sonnet or two on a basis of cutlets like these. But," he added, looking round the place, "you must get out of this, old fellow."

"So I shall," answered Arnold, "when that editorship falls in."

"We won't wait for that," said Dick. "You must come and dine with me to-night. There's a man lately joined the club, a barrister, with no briefs but heaps of cash, who wants to drop a few thousands over a new paper. You shall meet him, and he shall put you on the staff. He'll do anything for me, for I've introduced him to Cousin Joseph, who's going to take shares in the paper."

"I'm hardly in club form just now," answered Arnold, stroking his threadbare sleeve with an odd expression.

"That's no matter," said Dick. "We'll dine elsewhere, on the quiet. You must come, it will be a new start for you." And before he left, Dick had named a meeting-place for the evening, and wrung a promise from Arnold.

When our friend returned home that night he had been commissioned to write a series of articles for the new law journal to be started by Dick's friend.

Madame met him going upstairs to his room.

"Monsieur looks not well," she said. "He has the pain of the head, I think."

"Yes, but that is all," said Arnold. "Up very early this morning, madame."

"I shall take some coffee at monsieur's room," said madame.

When she went up with the coffee, ten minutes later, Arnold was in a stony sleep on his bed.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

HOW MRS. WARREN REDUCED MR. TRIMBLE.

LETTERS from Gilbert were received at Three Dykes, which said that his quest had been fruitless.

"He is jealous," said Marian in an unguarded moment to Mrs. Warren. "That is why he has not succeeded."

Good Mrs. Warren bridled instantly.

"It is exceedingly wrong of you to say so, dear," she exclaimed, with some warmth. "Not one in a thousand would have behaved as generously as he has done. He is in love with you himself, and he is doing his utmost to bring you to the favored suitor."

"Yes; it was wrong of me. He has behaved very nobly," said Marian.

Mrs. Warren was pacified, and kissed her, and said she felt thoroughly distressed for her, and Gilbert would no doubt find him before long.

"Oh, if he could but find him!" said Marian. "I seem to have grown so selfish lately. I can think only of Arnold, lost and in want, as I am certain he must be. I weary all of you, and you are all so kind."

Mrs. Warren said they were all greatly concerned in the matter, but that it was quite natural Marian's anxiety should exceed all of theirs, and she had shown no feeling which was not entirely becoming.

The truth is, however, life was made very uncomfortable at Three Dykes in those days; Marian allowed no peace to any of them. She was possessed by a fixed idea. She, and she alone, was responsible for what had befallen Arnold, and it was her duty, above that of every one else, to rescue and right him. What was to follow when this had been done she had no longer concerned to ask herself; but she made no scruple of letting every one see that Arnold had become her world.

By turns, she coaxed and goaded her uncle, Mrs. Warren, and the vicar; not that she saw clearly what help, if any, they could give her; but she must endeavor to quiet her brain by proposing this thing and that, by urging one or another course on each of her friends in turn, and not sparing reproaches when she was shown the impossibility of almost every suggestion she made. As for Parson Paul, he became downright afraid of the Vineyard and its perturbed young mistress; seldom went near it till after the hour when Marian was likely to be abed, and used to hang out a signal of some sort from one of his upper windows when he wanted the society of the lieutenant. He stormed at the poor lieutenant in a tremendous way, so that Lemuel began to be as much afraid of the Vicarage as Paul was of the Vineyard, and occasionally disregarded the signals, which made Paul angrier than anything else.

Mrs. Warren began to say that she must return to town, but Marian said her dear friend must on no account desert her; for though Mrs. Warren was scarcely more fertile in suggestion than the others, she was at any rate a sympathetic listener, and this as much as anything else was what Marian wanted just now.

One day Marian had an inspiration. She ought to have had it long before, but that is nothing to the purpose.

"Why," said she to herself, "we have none of us communicated with Mr. Trimble! He must know everything! How absurdly careless and forgetful!"

She carried this notion about with her half the day, and then took it to Mrs. Warren. Mrs. Warren entirely approved it, and said she wondered none of them had thought of it before.

"But it is just the way," she observed. "The most obvious thing to do is the thing one never does; I have often remarked it. You will write to him, dear, of course?"

"No," answered Marian; "I shall not write to him."

"Then what will you do, dear?"

"I shall go to him."

"Alone?"

"Yes."

Mrs. Warren let her book fall and laughed.

"What are you laughing at?" asked Marian. "Can I not do that?"

"My dear child, no! It is utterly and preposterously impracticable."

Marian grew impatient.

"I am tired," she said, "of hearing that everything is utterly and preposterously impracticable. That is what you all say to all my proposals. Yet you none of you propose anything."

"Well, I am going to propose something," replied Mrs. Warren calmly.

"And what is that, please?"

"Well, dear, we must go to work in a respectable and scientific manner. It would never do for you to call on this gentleman alone, in his own office. Think what a situation you would place yourself in. I would accompany you willingly, but it would not be a bit more respectable if we both went together. Indeed, we should find ourselves in as foolish a position as ever was. No, that is not the way at all, Let me see, he is a solicitor. Surely I know some one in that profession. Yes, there is Mrs. Seeling; her husband is a member of the firm of Seeling and White, a firm, I believe, of very high standing. At any rate, they send in very long bills, for they once undertook an annoying affair for me—when I could not get rid of a most troublesome tenant. It is a very interesting story, but never mind it now. Let me see, where was I?"

"You started with Mrs. Seeling," said Marian, not quite perceiving the drift of Mrs. Warren's remarks.

"To be sure. Well, I should think it very likely that Mr. Seeling and Mr. Trimble, being persons of eminence in their profession, are well known to each other. Very good; we approach Mr. Seeling through Mrs. Seeling, and Mr. Trimble through Mr. Seeling. That is at once respectable and scientific."

"But Mr. Brunskill knows Mr. Trimble," said Marian.

"That makes a difference," said Mrs. Warren.

"And I think Uncle Lemuel used to know him a little."

"That is better still. But, for all that, my idea is not a bad one. We will go to town, you shall come to my house, and I will communicate with Mrs. Seeling. Through her we shall devise some proper means of approaching Mr. Trimble. Your uncle must accompany us, and we shall set him to work in another way. What do you think of that?"

"It is the best thing we have yet thought of," answered Marian, delightedly. "We will go at once, and I will get Uncle Lemuel's consent to accompany us."

She asked Uncle Lemuel how he could possibly have omitted to communicate with Mr. Trimble respecting Arnold, and particularly respecting the severance of his connection with Mr. Trimble's firm. It may be mentioned that the vicar had had a letter from Mr. Trimble shortly after Arnold left his employ, but had suppressed it, not being quite clear as to the meaning of the solicitor's rather enigmatical epistle. The lieutenant, in answer to Marian, said it was certainly culpable that no one had written to Mr. Trimble.

Marian then gave him Mrs. Warren's proposals, to which the lieutenant said he could not object. He agreed to go with them to town, and two days later they were installed in Mrs. Warren's house in Bayswater. Parson Paul breathed an ampler air when they had gone, and he was free to range his pastures again.

"It will be better in London than at Three Dykes, at all events," Marian had thought; but when town was reached, and she glimpsed the streets stretching endlessly toward every point, and remembered through how many miles of brick and mortar they had driven from Mrs. Warren's house to the docks on their way to Madeira, her heart sunk within her, and for the first time she appreciated the immensity of the task she had imposed on Gilbert.

"What is the matter, dear? you look quite dazed," said Mrs. Warren, laying a hand on her arm, as they were being driven from the station to her house.

"It is so big!" answered Marian, emphasizing the last two words with a long-drawn sigh. "Who could find anything or anybody here?"

"Wait till you and I begin," said Mrs. Warren. "Men are not at all so useful in these affairs as they are supposed to be. I have noticed a singular inaptitude in them for inquiries of this sort."

The lieutenant bowed and smiled, as if acquiescing fully in this wholesale disparagement of the sex.

Gilbert, having been apprised of their coming, was an early visitor.

"My good knight-errant," said Marian, when he sat himself on the sofa beside her; "your labors have been

greater than I believed. I do not wonder that you have not succeeded."

"True I have not succeeded yet; but neither have I given up trying," was the answer.

He wondered, as he looked at her sitting there in her fresh beauty, her face kindled by the narrative he had given her of his unrewarded efforts, whether the object of their great concern was worthy of it. What would not he have promised and paid to know that her face had shone, or ever could shine, like that for him! She was animated, he had stirred her interest, she spoke to him without reserve or restraint. It was good to enjoy even this with her, though he knew that he was not the cause of her eagerness.

"Have you still some hope then?" she asked.

"Hope? I live on it!" said he, with a forced gayety, for in this way he could bring her to smile and look pleased. "Every day I strike some new path and follow it. I have my emissaries, too, who know the road better than I do. Depend upon it one or other of us will come up with him before long."

"How good you are!" she said; "I think no one but you would have done this for me."

And the lover took this as his payment, and went away to renew the search with greater energy than before.

The lieutenant was for calling in person on Mr. Trimble at once, but Mrs. Warren peremptorily forbade this line of action. Nor would she suffer him to write; she knew, she said, a better mode than these of circumventing the man of parchments.

So the lieutenant, when Marian's importunities tried him too sorely, used to go out and ride on the knife-board of an omnibus, keeping an eye on both sides of the road at once, with a view to discover in any pedestrain the lineaments of Arnold.

A pleasant-looking lady called one afternoon whom Mrs. Warren introduced to no one, but received in her boudoir, where they were closeted for upward of an hour.

"What did you think of her?" asked Mrs. Warren afterward of Marian.

"Of your visitor?" answered Marian. "I only saw her as she was going upstairs."

"That was Mrs. Seeling."

"Oh! Tell me everything you said and did, you two. Why was not I there?"

"You there, indeed! You would have spoiled everything! You would have been disrespectable and unscientific in your proposals, and nothing would have satisfied you. Mrs. Seeling and I are very clever and long-headed persons, and we know what may and may not be done with propriety. We have arranged the whole plan of the campaign, and operations will be commenced immediately."

"Tell me; please tell me," said Marian, excitedly.

"Well, then, there is to be a dinner-party."

"A dinner-party! What a dreadfully British way of beginning," pointed Marian.

"There is nothing like a dinner-party," replied Mrs. Warren, in a quiet tone of conviction. "Anything and everything may be done during or immediately after a well-ordered banquet. I have never known it fail, provided you have a trustworthy cook; and Mrs. Seeling assures me that her cook is to be relied on in every dish."

"And what after the dinner, Mrs. Warren?"

"Coffee, my dear. Mrs. Seeling has the Turkish recipe. It is during the period of coffee that the affair will be completed."

"I don't understand in the least what you are going to do," said Marian.

"To be sure, you don't, dear," replied Mrs. Warren, complacently, stroking the girl's head; "but it is of no consequence; Mrs. Seeling and Susan Warren know, and that is enough. But you look so stupidly bewildered that I will tell you. Mr. Trimble is to make one at this dinner-party; you and I are to make two more. You will be dressed in white, and look very nice and interesting; that is all you will have to do. We may not call upon you even to open your lips during the whole evening."

"I am sure I shall enjoy myself very much," said Marian.

"It is quite immaterial whether you do or not, my dear. Your part will be to create an agreeable impression, and nothing further."

"And what are you to do, Mrs. Warren?"

"First, Mr. Seeling, who is not to be in the secret at all, will open fire with a question which it will be given him to put. This will produce the desired effect on Mr. Trimble, and I shall do the rest. If you watch in a discreet manner

from some quiet corner of the room, you will see what you will see."

"And what is Uncle Lemuel to do?"

"We shall leave him at home. Sarah will get him a nice little dinner, and afterward he will read the evening paper or walk in the park; the fullest liberty will be given him."

"And will this help us to find Arnold, Mrs. Warren?"

"It will be a poor lookout if it does not," she replied.

On a night soon after this, Mr. Trimble remained behind after his clerks had left the office, and put on festive raiment in his inner room. What did he know of plots or machinations as he smoothed his tie and gave a nice set to his coat?

When he had finished his toilet, he took a turn round the office and glanced into Mr. Jones's room, the same that Arnold had occupied. It was scrupulously neat, not a stray paper anywhere, but Mr. Trimble frowned and looked dissatisfied. "There's no finding fault with the rogue," he muttered as he went out.

He took a cab, and gave the number of a house in Russell Square.

Mrs. Warren and Marian were late in arriving.

"Is he here?" whispered Mrs. Warren, when she had shaken hands with her hostess.

"Yes; he has just come."

"Show him to me," said Mrs. Warren, adjusting her glasses.

"Behind you, at the fire-place, talking to my husband."

"Ah! a solid man, with a slow-working brain and a droop of the eyelids. He reminds me of my brother Edward, whom I could always manage."

A small party, chiefly professional, and most of the guests acquainted with each other. The males were already talking shop; where two or three lawyers are gathered together, the talk is inevitably and invariably shop.

"Chubbs had another decision reversed." "Yes, the third in as many weeks. They say he can't get over it." "A poor lot of Q. C.'s, this last batch; only one college man amongst them." "I don't believe in college men. The three cracks amongst the advocates never took a degree in their lives." "There's a new man just come out

who'll do something good before long; Earl his name is. I've put two or three small things in his way, and he's pulled them all off. A West-Countryman; they have long heads there." "Ah! he's connected with newspapers, isn't he?" (This from Trimble.) "I distrust a man who's connected with newspapers;" and so on.

To Mr. Trimble, as the guest of highest standing in the profession, Mrs. Warren and Marian were both introduced.

"What have you done with Arnold?" is what Marian would have liked to say, but she had been bidden to be very silent on that topic, and all she said was that she had *not* seen the new Law Courts, Mr. Trimble having questioned her thereon.

Dinner. Soup, fish, and with the *entrées* a little dry champagne.

Mr. Seeling leaned across the table, and said in a careless tone to Mr. Trimble, "What has become of young Lee, who was with you so long?"

Mr. Trimble, who was eating larks with every appearance of relish, narrowly escaped being choked by a leg-bone. He frowned, reddened, disengaged the bone, looked up, and replied, "He is a bankrupt; that's all I know of him."

"What a horrid person!" thought Marian, and then her heart bled for Arnold, a bankrupt.

"It was too sudden," thought Mrs. Warren. "He is choleric, and lark bones are really very dangerous things. I wonder any of us have the heart to eat the little creatures; but since they are dead, and cooked very nicely, it would be a pity to waste them. I must remedy matters after dinner."

Mr. Seeling said no more about Arnold, the subject being evidently a disquieting one; and in due course the dessert made its appearance. By the time this stage was reached, Mr. Trimble was once more of a cheerful countenance, Mrs. Seeling having taken care that the dry champagne was never far from his hand.

Under the combined influence of coffee and music, a little later on, Mr. Trimble turned a kindly and not too speculative eye upon the company at large, and began to be disposed for slumber.

Mrs. Warren, watching her opportunity, saw that she must delay no longer. She seated herself beside him, and opened up in this way:

"I heard a name mentioned to you at dinner in which I am greatly interested."

"Whose name was that, madam?" inquired the solicitor, smiling on her.

"The name of Mr. Lee."

Mr. Trimble roused himself and looked at Mrs. Warren, with an expression half of annoyance and half of incredulity.

"You knew him, madam?" said he.

"I have the pleasure of a slight acquaintance with him, but I am very intimate with friends of his in the country."

"Hum! Yes. He had friends, I believe."

"And still has," said Mrs. Warren, feelingly; "friends who are very greatly distressed on his account."

"What has become of him?" said Mr. Trimble.

This was a question Mrs. Warren was not prepared for; in fact, it was the very question which, later on, she had intended to put to Mr. Trimble. Did Mr. Trimble know no more than the rest?

"Do you not know?" she said.

"I don't know where he is at present," replied Mr. Trimble.

"I wish you would tell me all you do know," said Mrs. Warren, with the softest, most persuasive air in the world.

Mr. Trimble devoutly wished he had gone to sleep just ten minutes ago, when it had first occurred to him as an agreeable mode of shortening the evening. He wished he had not accepted Seeling's invitation. He wished Mrs. Trimble would summon him home by telegram; but, above all, he wished Mrs. Warren at the other end of the drawing-room. Unfortunately he had no wishing-cap, and he found himself still face to face with Mrs. Warren, who had just made a very awkward request.

But he remembered that he had spoke somewhat ungraciously in reply to his host's question at the dinner-table, and thought that if this lady were a friend of his troublesome ex-manager, and an intimate friend of his ex-manager's friends, it was probable that his words had left a somewhat displeasing impression on her mind. This, at all events, must be removed. So he set himself somewhat unwillingly to comply with Mrs. Warren's request.

"Young Mr. Lee, madam," said he, "came to me in great urgency some months ago, just after I had promoted him to the highest place in my office, and requested to borrow the sum of two hundred and fifty pounds. I was fool enough to lend it to him. I beg your pardon; that is not a nice expression. Let me say rather that I was unwise enough to accede to his request. He was very pressing about it, and as I had always found him an honest and steady lad, and had great faith in him, I could not bring myself to deny him."

Marian, seated in the furthest corner of the room, with a music-stand betwixt herself and a too ardent young barrister, watched this colloquy with interest the more intense that she could not of course overhear a word of it.

"May I ask when this took place?" inquired Mrs. Warren.

"It happened either immediately after Christmas or within a day or two of the new year. I find that I am never precise as to dates after business hours," replied Mr. Trimble.

"Christmas or the new year," thought Mrs. Warren. "This explains much. It was just then that they were trying to get Marian away to Madeira."

She made a signal to Marian that the attack was progressing satisfactorily, and commenced to ply Mr. Trimble again.

"And what followed, if I may venture to ask, after you had generously advanced him this large sum?"

Mr. Trimble winced slightly, and more than ever wished himself asleep.

"Many things followed, Mrs. Warren, of a more or less painful nature. There is no need for me to enter into details of the daily routine of a lawyer's office. Enough that I very soon had occasion to repent of what I had done. I fear that by my absurd and most unprofessional readiness to comply with Lee's desire I did something to spoil a very promising lad."

"How could that have been, Mr. Trimble? Could so good a deed produce such unhappy consequences?"

"Madam, it was not a good deed; it was very much the reverse of a good deed. I unwittingly helped that young man to bring serious trouble upon himself, and we were both of us punished for it—I, by losing an efficient helper,

who might one day have been my partner; he, by losing a position which few at his age have enjoyed."

"It is most sad," said Mrs. Warren, earnestly; "but I am still not quite clear as to the nature of this trouble poor Mr. Lee brought upon himself."

"I have never been clear as to that myself," replied Mr. Trimble.

"What then—" began Mrs. Warren.

"But this I know," interrupted the solicitor, "that from the day I handed him a check for two hundred and fifty pounds a change for the worse came over him."

"He told you, I suppose, for what purpose he required the money?" said Mrs. Warren, more eager than she showed respecting the answer this query might fetch.

"No!" exclaimed Trimble, with something of triumph in his voice; "that is just the thing he would not do. And when weeks went by, and he fell away more and more in his work, in his manner, in his appearance, I was driven to the worst possible conclusions. I felt convinced, and still do, that—you must pardon me, madam—that he had allowed himself to be entangled in some discreditable affair, some *liaison*, something that would not bear to be looked into, and therefore that could not be confessed."

"And so, Mr. Trimble—"

"And so, Mrs. Warren, he left me. His habits had become altogether incompatible with that strictness of conduct which is indispensable in such an office as mine."

"And you do not know where he is at present?"

"I do not. Steps were—hum! Steps were taken for the—the recovery of this large amount, and I believe that, as a matter or fact, Lee is at this present time a bankrupt."

"Poor, dear, splendid boy!"

This was Mrs. Warren's final comment on Mr. Trimble's story.

Mr. Trimble gasped, as if he had been struck smartly somewhere in the region of the waistband. The slight gesture with which Mrs. Warren signaled Marian at this stage would alone have suggested the analogy.

"Really, madam," said Mr. Trimble, when he had succeeded in loosening his tongue, "I do not understand your expression. May I be forgiven if I say that you seem to know more about this affair than I do?"

When Mr. Trimble had finished his story he had jerked his watch out of his pocket, as a delicate sign to a lady who had (or had had) a husband of her own that Mrs. Trimble looked for his coming.

Mrs. Warren, of course, took no notice of Mr. Trimble's watch, and he was sorry now that he had pulled it out, for he could not in his agitation get it in again. There are few situations in which a man preserves less dignity than in the effort to get a large watch into a small fob.

"I know more and I know less than you do, Mr. Trimble," replied Mrs. Warren. "I know that you have formed a complete misconception respecting Mr. Lee and his misfortune. I believe that I now understand the whole matter; and if I am right, Mr. Lee has performed an act of the most heroic self-sacrifice. You speak of some discreditable entanglement, but the only affair of the heart in which Mr. Lee has ever been concerned is a most honorable attachment to a young lady of the highest character."

"Is that indeed so?" said Mr. Trimble, with some feeling.

"It is the case," replied Mrs. Warren. "You yourself have met the young lady, Mr. Trimble, and at no very distant date."

"You surprise me very greatly," said Mr. Trimble.

"She is here in this room," said Mrs. Warren. "You were introduced to her here this evening by Mrs. Seeling. She is the niece of your old college friend, Lieutenant Dean."

"You astonish me profoundly!" said Mr. Trimble. "The beautiful and charming young lady who is now talking with Mrs. Seeling, I suppose?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Warren. "That is Miss Dean. It would not surprise me to know that it was for her sake, when she was dangerously ill in the winter, and her uncle (who is to her in the place of the father she lost when a child) could not procure the means to send her abroad as the doctors ordered, that her lover, Arnold, borrowed this sum from you. If it were so, you can understand his unwillingness to give you any explanation."

"Mrs. Warren, you have interested me in the highest degree," said Mr. Trimble, gravely, kindly, and with emphasis. "I am open," he went on, "not only to argument, but to conviction; and I should welcome the

certain knowledge that there are matters in which I have deceived myself."

The good man in truth was completely flabbergasted.

"I thank you, Mr. Trimble," said Mrs. Warren. "Your expressions do you the utmost honor. But it is not right that you should have this matter merely at second-hand. I trust you will allow me to take steps with a view to laying before you what I believe to be the full and entire truth."

"By so doing, madam," replied the solicitor, "you will lay me under a heavy debt of gratitude."

He made her a handsome bow, and she withdrew. Mr. Trimble, on her departure, found himself with something less than the consistency of a polype, and his coffee-cup empty of stimulant.

"I believe I have made a great fool of myself," said Mr. Trimble, and rose up and went home.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

OF MR. TRIMBLE'S SUBSEQUENT BEHAVIOR.

"It is all going excellently," said Mrs. Warren to Marian, when they were discussing the reduction of Mr. Trimble, on the morning after the dinner-party.

Mrs. Warren was satisfied that she had now got to the root of the matter. Arnold owed Mr. Trimble two hundred and fifty pounds. Unquestionably, it was for Marian he had borrowed it. Precisely what had followed, as regarded Arnold's relations with the solicitor, she did not know; but she guessed shrewdly enough that Mr. Trimble had been annoyed from the first at being kept entirely in the dark as to Arnold's object in procuring the loan, and that motives of pique and jealousy had had much to do with Arnold's ultimate dismissal, since dismissed he had evidently been. Undoubtedly, too, it was through Mr. Trimble's action that he had been made a bankrupt.

There was more to be learned, inasmuch as Mr. Trimble knew no more than Arnold's friends where Arnold was at present; but, at any rate, something had been effected toward clearing up the mystery in which the whole affair had been involved up to the night of the dinner-party.

"I am still a good deal in the dark," said Marian. "I did not much like his appearance; what sort of person did you find him?"

"I found him very like my brother George, dear," replied Mrs. Warren.

"But I never knew your brother George, Mrs. Warren."

"True, dear; I had forgotten. He had a very good heart when you reached it, but in his intellectual parts he was what I call fluffy. Now, Mr. Trimble is fluffy; but I like him, for his foundations are correct, and he is willing to be persuaded. I have gone some way to persuade him that he has been behaving like a man without any wisdom; but his lights have not been quite clear, and we must all of us act according to our lights."

"But I really don't understand what it is that you have done, Mrs. Warren," pleaded Marian.

"My dear! did you not then understand my signals?"

"Gesture is, after all, quite a primitive mode of expression, you know," said Marian.

"I don't know anything about primitive modes of expression, Marian, but I signaled you as plainly as possible in the drawing-room last night that I had—well, upon my word, you compel me to use a most vulgar form of speech. My poor dear brother George had a painful habit of borrowing pugilistic phrases in his conversation, and when he had got the better of a person in argument he spoke of having knocked that person out of time. It is a shocking style of speech, but your extreme slowness of apprehension, dear, which I wonder at in a girl of your attainments, compels me to tell you that I knocked Mr. Trimble out of time last night."

Mrs. Warren looked so thoroughly ashamed of herself in making this draft on the phraseology of her late brother that Marian stopped her laughter to offer a humble apology.

"But, after all, dear Mrs. Warren," she went on, when the apology had been tendered and accepted, "what is the outcome? What was the use of proving to Mr. Trimble that he has acted unjustly toward Arnold? Poor Arnold! The mischief has been done, you see, and Mr. Trimble knows no more than we do where Arnold is at present."

"After this, dear," said Mrs. Warren, gravely, "I really must entreat you never again to have anything to do with what you call high mathematics. It is a study which seems

to unfit people for grasping the most ordinary facts of our common daily existence. You positively can not see what I have achieved? You surprise me! We have two things to accomplish. We have in the first place to find out where Arnold is at present. That we can do without Mr. Trimble's assistance. When we have found him we have, in the second place, to bring about his reinstatement in his profession. For that we shall need Mr. Trimble's help. Mr. Trimble has, as I believe, made the poor young man a bankrupt; he must undo that, for I believe it can be done in such a manner that no stain or stigma need remain. Very well; now, as the result of what I told him last night, Mr. Trimble is already favorably disposed toward us. He begins to see that he has been in the wrong. We shall prove it to him clearly before we have finished, and I am certain that he will do then whatever we ask of him. Now, my dear child, do you begin to understand?"

Marian put her arms round Mrs. Warren's neck and kissed her on both cheeks.

"Dear Mrs. Warren," she said, "you have the best brain of us all."

Mrs. Warren received this encomium as no other than her due, but she returned Marian's salute with warmth.

"And now," said Marian, "what is the next thing to be done. Am I not to be allowed to beard the ogre at all?"

"I do not know whether you are to be trusted," replied Mrs. Warren, whereat, of course, Marian looked much aggrieved. "I don't mean, dear, that you would not behave yourself with propriety, but I doubt whether you would quite understand what to do, or how to do it."

"You shall instruct me, Mrs. Warren," she answered meekly.

"I could not in any case think of letting you go alone," said Mrs. Warren.

"Then you must go with me."

"No, I think I must remain in the background for the present; I have done enough at the front. But there is the lieutenant—is *he* to be trusted? You see we must be very careful not to spoil, but to strengthen, the good impression we have produced. I am convinced that the assistance of Mr. Trimble is necessary, and to that end we must first make sure of his friendship. Yes, I think that you and the lieutenant shall go together."

The lieutenant, for his part, was only too glad to be allowed to do something—anything. Lately he had been wondering why they had brought him up to town at all, his *rôle* in the detective service which Mrs. Warren had organized being the humblest possible. This going to and fro on the knife-boards of omnibuses was very well, but it led nowhere, unless to Shepherd's Bush or the Bank. This perambulating of the park was healthy enough as an exercise; but between the Round Pond and the Serpentine it is a narrow way, and Arnold was not in any of these places.

"Yes, yes; I will accompany her with pleasure," said the lieutenant, when Mrs. Warren unfolded to him the plan of the proposed new assault on Mr. Rupert Trimble. "But is Mr. Trimble prepared to receive us?"

"I will prepare him," replied Mrs. Warren.

Accordingly, very soon after this, she issued this brief order during breakfast:

"You will go to-day, both of you."

The old soldier took the word of command as a soldier should, without a syllable; but Marian, who was unused to military precepts, called for explanations.

"Where are we to go? How will he receive us? Is Uncle Lemuel to talk, or am I to talk, or is Mr. Trimble to talk, and which of us is to begin? and—"

"My dear, you have said more than enough," interrupted Mrs. Warren. "You will see Mr. Trimble at his office in Bedford Row. The reception he will accord you will, I imagine, depend principally on your own behavior. I think that unless Mr. Trimble himself leads the way, you had better allow your uncle to open the conversation. Perhaps, dear, it will not be necessary for you to talk at all; but if you do say anything, I trust you will be very guarded in your language, and not allow yourself to be carried away by your feelings. Remember that Mr. Trimble's present disposition is a very friendly one, and that nothing must be said or done which might induce him to change it."

All of which was received in a duly submissive spirit by the lieutenant, as an orderly officer might listen to mingled counsel and reproof from his general; but Marian, as a young person unfamiliar with the discipline of war, reserved to herself the privilege of pouting.

"A cab will be ready at eleven o'clock to take you both

to Bedford Row," said Mrs. Warren, when breakfast was over; and as the clock struck eleven wheels were heard outside.

The lieutenant had been waiting in the hall for at least a quarter of an hour, with his cane in his hand, and his cloak, the only martial badge that remained to him, neatly draped over his arm.

Marian tripped down-stairs in a gray dress, which Mrs. Warren herself had selected as a color at once modest and becoming, which befitted an occasion of some gravity. The maid was waiting at the foot of the stairs with a yellow rose, but Mrs. Warren at once rejected it, on the ground that if Mr. Trimble had any familiarity with the language of flowers—"and really persons in his curious and rather painful profession come to know so many things"—he would at once recognize the inappropriateness of the emblem.

"What does a yellow rose stand for, then?" asked Marian.

"For that which is not true in your case, my dear," replied Mrs. Warren, as she dismissed the maid with orders to put the rose in water.

The lieutenant handed his niece into the cab and placed himself beside her, and Mrs. Warren shut the door on them and gave them her blessing and the cabman the address.

"You don't feel at all alarmed, Uncle Lemuel, do you?" said Marian, for the lieutenant preserved a grave and silent demeanor, though he kept arranging and rearranging his cloak on his arm.

"No, my dear, no; of what should I be frightened?" he replied.

"For my part," said Marian, "I don't feel a bit afraid of anything or anybody."

"It is very well, my dear, it is very well indeed; though for my own part I would not go quite so far as that."

They rode in silence until the cab turned into Bedford Row.

"Oh!" exclaimed Marian; "the cab is stopping; this must be the place."

"It is very likely, for we have driven a long way, but—what is the matter, my dear? You are not frightened?"

"Frightened! oh, no, indeed! But—yes, I suppose this

is the place. To think that Arnold went in and out of this dingy, dusty house for so many years. Do you think, Uncle Lemuel, it would be better if you—if you went in first?"

"No, Marian, assuredly not; we ought, I feel certain, to make our entry together; it was Mrs. Warren's wish that we should do so."

They passed into the outer office, where Master Tomahawk Jarvis, who thought Marian would be a charming captive to rescue from the clutches of an opposing tribe, inquired of the lieutenant his name and his business.

"Say Lieutenant Dean has called by appointment, if you please," replied the lieutenant, Mrs. Warren having schooled him thus far.

"Lieutenant Dean, by appointment, sir," said the Boy Chief, putting his head in at Mr. Trimble's door.

Marian's glance wandered timidly round the office; she wondered which of the clerks sat in Arnold's seat; she caught sight of Mr. Jones in the manager's room, and concluded he must be Arnold's successor. She wished she had not talked so bravely about not being afraid of anything or anybody.

"Walk in," said Mr. Trimble to the boy; but he meant that Lieutenant Dean was to walk in, not the boy.

Marian and her uncle were ushered in, and the door closed behind them.

On the first visit of new clients, Mr. Trimble generally decided at a glance whether to receive them sitting or standing, but he had already risen from his chair when Marian and the lieutenant entered.

The room looked just as it had done on the day when Arnold quitted it—or, for that matter, as it had done on any day in any year for twenty years past. The deed-boxes of "Green *v.* White," "Exors. of Simpson," and so on, occupied the same places on the same shelf, and the silver hand-bell, the sand-box, and the inkstand stood precisely where they always did on Mr. Trimble's desk.

Mr. Trimble shook hands with both of them, and was the first to speak.

"It is many years since you and I met," he said to the lieutenant.

"It is more than five-and-thirty," replied the lieutenant.

"Five-and-thirty years," said Mr. Trimble, slowly, "is a long time."

"It is fifteen years short of half a century," said the lieutenant.

"You are right, lieutenant," replied Mr. Trimble; "it is neither more nor less than that. It is fifteen years short of half a century."

"It is ten years more than a quarter of a century," said the lieutenant, encouraged to find how well he was getting on.

"It is ten years more than a quarter of a century," responded Mr. Trimble.

"We met last, if my memory does not betray me," said the lieutenant, "at the Great Exhibition of '51."

"That was a very fine display," observed Mr. Trimble.

"I have heard of nothing like it since," answered the lieutenant.

"But here," said Mr. Trimble, turning to Marian, for whom he drew a seat near his desk, "here is a young lady to whom all this is only a matter of history."

"Marian was not born at that time," said the lieutenant, who would not have believed that he could talk so fluently.

"There is no need to tell me that," returned Mr. Trimble, politely.

"My niece was not born for twelve or thirteen years after that time," said the lieutenant.

"I will call no witnesses in support of that statement," replied Mr. Trimble, with a gallant smile.

Indeed, each gentleman was persuaded that in a conversational point of view he was doing himself the highest possible justice.

Marian thought it was time they left chronologizing and came to Arnold.

A pause ensued. Mr. Trimble sat down again at his desk, and the lieutenant took a seat beside Marian.

Mr. Trimble shuffled his letters and cleared his throat.

His visitors, did they but know it, could not have come upon him in a more favorable mood. It was a charming day, and Mr. Trimble, whose temper shifted with the barometer, was charmingly disposed. The man had much warmth at his heart when one got down to it; we have seen him a man of impulse, jealous, and, for one of his

trade, somewhat sensitive; who could act with meanness or generosity, as the mood impelled him. He did a thing in haste, and seven times out of ten he repented it at leisure. He lent Arnold two hundred and fifty pounds in haste and repented it at leisure. He dismissed him from his service in haste, and that also at his leisure he had since repented.

The conversation Mrs. Warren had forced upon him at the dinner-party the other evening had impressed him deeply. It had done so because it had in a moment let in a flood of light upon what had until then been a mystery to him. It made him see Arnold and his conduct as, perhaps, it had scarcely been possible for him to see them before.

The matter had been greatly on his mind since then, for at bottom he was a man of thorough honesty, and once roused, he did not rest till he had sifted the affair to the uttermost.

He took himself to task, brought under review his whole conduct in relation to Arnold, and came to the conclusion that if Mrs. Warren were faithfully informed as to what she had told him and as to what she had suggested, he had acted with something less than common justice.

Arnold's persistent secrecy in the matter of the loan had angered him; Jones's tongue had done the rest. He was bound to acknowledge that these two things had been the determining motives of his abrupt dismissal of the best man he had on his staff. If, then, Mrs. Warren had given him the true story—or in part given and in part suggested it—he had been the dupe of his own jealousy and of Jones's machinations.

He was curious—nay, he was eager—to have the whole truth before him; until he had that, he was not the man to confess, or even to hint, himself in the wrong.

"My friend, Mrs. Warren," he began, "if I may call her that on so short an acquaintance, was good enough the other evening to unfold some matters to me about which I had been a good deal in the dark. I need not say more definitely to what I refer. You are both, I believe, interested with me in what has certainly been a rather sad concern. To me it has involved much pain, apart from the fact that it ended by losing me the services of a valued helper. Mrs. Warren told me something, but not all; I

think I gathered from her that you, lieutenant, or you, Miss Dean, or both of you, were in a position to tell me everything."

"There is at most but little to tell," said the lieutenant. "Last winter my niece was very seriously ill, how seriously she herself did not know. The doctors told me that the one hope of saving her life lay in sending her out of the country. I knew that this was impossible, so far as I was concerned. I prayed to God that He would help us, and He sent Arnold to be our deliverer. Arnold and my niece have known one another from children; they grew up together. Arnold, who, when he was at home, lived almost as much under my roof as under his uncle's, was as my son, and I knew, what Marian did not then know, that he loved her with more than the love of an old play-fellow. Arnold was at home at this time. The very night that he heard from his uncle's lips how desperate her case was, he returned to London, and the next night he came back bringing with him bank-notes to the amount of two hundred and fifty pounds.

"With these he came to me on the following morning, and forced me to take them for Marian's sake. My conscience went against it, but the choice was between life and death. I took his money, my niece went to Madeira, and it is but a short time since she returned in full health. Arnold was the instrument, under God, whereby her life was saved."

"All this is as my uncle says, Mr. Trimble," said Marian, "but it is but yesterday since I knew it. When I came home there was no news of Arnold; he did not write. I found that he had not written for long. One day I learned that neither Uncle Lemuel nor Mr. Brunskill knew anything about him; then the whole story, as far as Uncle Lemuel could tell it, was told to me, and I knew for the first time how he had sacrificed himself for me, had ruined himself for me; how he had left you in disgrace and hidden himself, and—and—" Her lip trembled, but she mastered herself. Yet when she tried to begin again, she broke down afresh, and ended sobbing, "Arnold is lost to us. We have come to you; will you not help us?"

Tears had flowed in this room before now; and though the lieutenant's eyes were filmy, there was no moisture in Mr. Trimble's. But he was ripe for explosion, and he exploded.

"Heaven forgive me! I have done very wrong," said he. "I should have been this lad's friend; I have been his worst enemy! No, not his worst, for I fear I have let myself be the cat's-paw of a man who can be nothing but a rascal." And Mr. Trimble glared at the door, as though he would, if he could, pierce it and Jones together. "I have been a very stupid man, a very credulous man, an insensate man, a wicked man. Do you know what I have done? I have dismissed this poor Arnold, this Lee, from my service because I let myself think he was deceiving me and playing double. That was bad, but I have done worse. I have made a bankrupt of him. But he must be righted; I will right him myself. It is all the justice I can do him. Where is he?"

"Alas! that is what we do not know," said the lieutenant.

Mr. Trimble, still simmering after this thoroughly characteristic outburst, rapped his desk impatiently with his knuckles, and then catching sight of his bell, took it up and rang it violently.

"Mr. Jones!"

That gentleman appeared immediately.

"Mr. Lee's last address?"

"Robert Street, sir, close to this; but Mr. Lee is no longer there."

"How do you know that?"

"I called there, sir, not long since."

"What business had you to call? But no matter; where is he now?"

"The person of the house could not give me any information, sir."

"I don't know what business you had to ask for information."

"I, sir! Why—"

"Yes, yes, I know; that will do."

"Is there nothing further, sir?"

"Not at present."

Mr. Jones withdrew, slightly discomfited, and wondering what this might bode.

"And this fellow," growled Mr. Trimble, half to himself and half to his audience; "this fellow pretended to be Lee's friend. Poor Lee! But he shall be righted."

"But," objected Marian, sadly, "no one knows where he is."

"Tut! my dear young lady," replied the solicitor, a little testily; "do you think we can not find a man when we want him? I would wager he is within a mile of us at this moment. We unearthed a man we wanted in San Francisco last week, and he was a better hand than Arnold at hiding."

"How can we thank you?" said Marian. "You are indeed more than kind to us."

"I am doing now what, if I had had my eyes open at first, it would never have been necessary for me to do. I will have no thanks, if you please," replied Mr. Trimble.

"But you are kind, indeed," said the lieutenant, "and I do not forget that we lie under a heavy debt to you; for Arnold's debt is not his, but mine, and it shall be my duty—"

"That," interrupted Mr. Trimble, "is a thing which can be talked of at any time, and is certainly of no consequence at present. We have now to find this poor Arnold, and then to right him."

"Will not this righting of him be a difficult matter?" said the lieutenant.

"He is a bankrupt, poor Arnold!" said Marian. "And they say that leaves a stain for life."

"I tell you," said Mr. Trimble, energetically, "he shall be set upon his legs again sounder than ever he was. His bankruptcy shall be as though it never had been, for I myself will annul it."

CHAPTER XXXV.

"I THING I SEND THE DOCTOR AT YOU."

WE left Arnold in a dead sleep upon his bed. The entry of madame with the coffee did not arouse him; and madame, feeling the chillness of the room, and observing that the lodger shivered in his sleep, fetched a couple of old shawls from her own room, and put them over him.

"I thing I send for the doctor," said madame to herself, as she took her way down-stairs again.

At about midnight Arnold awoke, desperately cold in his lower extremities, and uncomfortably hot in his head, an

absurd arrangement, as he pointed out to himself whil undressing.

"Ah! madame has been here," he said, seeing the coffe which madame, by mere force of habit, had placed, to kee hot, on the hob over the entry grate.

"As I shall have to pay for it" (though madame, l the way, had *not* put the coffee to his account), "I ma as well drink it," he went on, moving across to the fir place. "Ugh! cold as the hob. Well, thanks to madan all the same; it was good of her to tramp upstairs with it

He went on with his undressing, his brain in a rath somnolent state, until he recalled the proceedings of tl earlier part of the evening, and the commission for wo which he had received in connection with the new pape Then he was sanguine again, and thought of nothing b the better days that were coming.

He was half disposed to fetch out pen and paper at onc but a wretched shivering fit seized him, and he sat dow on the bed, and listened to his teeth chattering. Clearly man could not do justice to himself or his editor in th ridiculous condition of body.

"Sleep it off!" thought Arnold, "and turn out bett 'copy' in the morning." So he finished undressing, a got into bed, and slept more comfortably than might ha been expected.

He slept for twelve hours, with scarcely a sound, a rose up feeling better. The new work had put heart in him. But madame, when she saw him, kept on sayin "I thing I send the doctor at you."

Arnold laughed; the notion of sending a doctor to a ma who had just had a promise of unlimited work at a payi price pricked his sense of humor.

He rattled two and sixpence in his pocket and called f a whole bottle of red wine at a shilling. The barber hi self was generally content with half a bottle at sixpenc He called the count to share it with him; and the cour who had no false pride about him, drank his share like man.

Then Arnold went up to his room, wrote and dispatch his first article, and by return of post received a letter fro the editor complimenting him on his style. The edit was a new hand, who did not think it beneath him to co mend good work.

Arnold was in great feather, and began to think he might on write home again. He had had many thoughts of ose at home, since he had voluntarily cut himself off om all communication with them. Had Marian returned om Madeira? What had she said or thought when she ıew of his long silence? Had they told her of his dis- ace? and what had she said or thought of that? He ver believed that the lieutenant would betray his trust to e extent of revealing their secret; but if he had preserved faithfully, how hard it must have been for Marian to ink of him as he knew that she had always thought in e past.

This, of course, had been the bitterest drop in his cup— at Marian should have heard of his disgrace and known ot how to explain it. He had boundless faith in her, but knew how sorely her faith in him must have been tried, d often he was tortured when he asked himself how long r faith would endure.

He was sanguine now, for he foresaw the day when he ight leave this creeping in the labyrinth, and go back to r and tell her everything, and ask her if it were in her art to reward him?

For a few days all went bravely with him. He shook off e disease of the mind that had been stealing on him; it ould have been well had he been able to do as much for s body. Want of food, and the ceaseless strain of work rried over from the day into the night, and the depres- on born of frequent visions for a time when work might il entirely—the cumulative effect of all this had been to duce a condition of body in which he was ripe for sick- ss of the worst sort.

With so many potent causes in operation, the opportunity collapse is readily furnished. A sudden *coup de vent*, a p in the street or on the stairs, a chill, a cold, persistent adache, or a slight fit of nausea—in any one of these the ctim who is prepared may quickly find his account.

Madame, who had a keen eye to her customers, noticed at Arnold had lately cut himself down to siege rations. ıe said one day, when he had dined on a small bowl of up, "Mistah Lee, w'y you heat so small? You used be ve good happetite. You 'fraid of you bill? Hay! dat t of no account. You heat, and you pay me w'en you el."

This was just before the turn had come in Arnold's for unes. Now he thought he might avail himself of m dame's generosity; but he had been cozening Nature for t long a day, and she wanted her revenge.

There was a dresser in the Central Hospital who had h lodgings in Soho, who used sometimes to come to the Re taurant Parisien for his supper. He, too, was one of th strait-pursed fraternity, and had grown friendly with A nold. He took to rallying him on his bad looks.

"You'll be giving us a call one of these days, old fe low," he said, laughing, and nodding in the direction the hospital. "I'll get them to make up a bed for you, he added.

Arnold put it off as carelessly.

"You're wanting a new subject for the dissecting-roon eh? Well, don't flatter yourself that you'll get me."

"I could carve you, my dear Lee," said the friendl dresser, "to a nicety."

"And as you did it you would chuckle in your throat t think that you owed me five shillings."

"I'd send it to a medical charity, on my honor," said th dresser; and they found this such a racy joke that the laughed until they woke the cigar-merchant sleeping in corner of the room, who said, when they told him wha they were laughing at, that it put him in mind of the bes anecdote in his repertory. And he straightway proceede to tell it to them.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

FOUND AND—

"But Mr. Trimble does not find him," said Marian.

"He has not had time," answered Mrs. Warren. "I is only three days since you were there."

"And really, my dear," said the lieutenant, recallin his peregrinations on public cars, "London appears to b a place of very considerable extent."

The fact is, however, they were all three somewhat ou of heart. There was a reaction after the excitement o finding and winning over Mr. Trimble, the one only thin they had accomplished. Gilbert had not been to them fo

ome days, which could not but mean that he had been no ore successful than they.

Mrs. Warren insisted that a little patience was all they eeded, and the lieutenant echoed all she said; but they emselves began to be secretly of opinion that Arnold ould be found what time it pleased him to reveal his hereabouts, and not sooner.

They were sitting over the breakfast-table, and the talk, which they harped always on the same topic, was beginning to flag, when the servant announced:

"Mr. Reade."

Marian, who had been crying, made haste to escape by side door, and vanished just as Gilbert entered. There as news written on his face.

"You have found him!" exclaimed Mrs. Warren.

"No!" said Gilbert; "but some one else has.

And he recounted the adventure of Bell, which Bell mself had told him the night before. With what intert and curiosity they heard him may be imagined.

The lieutenant could hardly wait till Gilbert had finish-, and then jumped up to fetch Marian, who, he said, ust come down at once and hear the whole story from ilbert's lips.

But Gilbert stayed him, and said, with a smile, and a ok behind it which there was no mistaking:

"I should prefer that you and Mrs. Warren told it her tween you."

For doubtless to poor Gilbert this was a heavy message at he bore. But he made with a laugh as though he ere merely shy of telling her, which he might well enough etend, seeing his news was that he, who loved Marian mself, had found for her the man she loved better.

The lieutenant silently grasped his hand, and Mrs. arren looked very kindly on him, and remembered that ying of hers about him, which she kept in her own heart.

However, there was business in hand.

"Does he know of our search for him?" asked the lieunant.

"No," said Gilbert. "Bell told him nothing of that."

"I think perhaps it was wisest," replied the lieutenant.

"There is no doubt about that," said Gilbert, "for he s evidently bent on keeping close for the present; and to

have told him that a search was on foot would probably ha resulted in making him change his quarters."

"And how did your friend find the poor boy, Gilbe I mean in what state?" asked Mrs. Warren.

"Don't be too particular about that, Aunt Susan," a swered Gilbert. "We have found him; let that suffice y for the present."

"But you don't mean that he is starving, or—or an thing of that kind, do you, Gilbert?"

"Oh, dear, no! nothing of the kind. Why, he lives in French restaurant."

"A person must pay for his food whether he lives in restaurant or anywhere else," said Mrs. Warren.

"But when are we to see him?" inquired the lie tenant.

"Well, that I take it is as you please," said Gilbe "If you want me to be your guide I am ready to go wi you at any time."

"Marian will certainly want us to go at once," said t lieutenant.

"I think you had better go this evening," said M Warren. "You must take your chance of seeing hi If you don't find him, let the person of the house r say that you have been, and you must go again morrow."

"Are you of this mind, lieutenant?" said Reade.

"What Mrs. Warren says is always the best that can said," replied the old soldier, who had no mind of his o while under the authority of Mrs. Warren's.

"Then I propose we start at about six this evening said Gilbert. "You had better come and dine wi me at the club, lieutenant. We might meet young Be who would perhaps tell us more, and we can start fro there."

This was agreed upon, and Gilbert left, and Mrs. Warr went upstairs to tell Marian, who sat disconsolate on t great divan in the drawing-room.

"Well, then, they have found our Arnold!" were M Warren's first words.

"Oh! but indeed, is it true?" cried Marian, jumping and running to meet Mrs. Warren.

"Yes; some friend of Gilbert's, who knew that Gilbe was looking for him, met him in the street late one nigh

on his way from a newspaper-office. Arnold took him home with him; he lives in Soho, at a French restaurant. We have the address, and Gilbert and the lieutenant are to go to see him to-night."

"But does Arnold know? Are they certain to find him? Will he receive them?"

"Arnold knows nothing. It would never have done to tell him, for you see, dear, the poor fellow has been deliberately hiding, and would perhaps have run off somewhere else if he had learned that we were looking for him; but be sure that Gilbert and the lieutenant will find him to-night."

"Did you learn nothing about him?—how he is, what he looked like, what he is doing?"

"My dear, do not be too curious at present. No doubt he is doing very nicely, for I believe those French restaurants are very expensive places to live in, but of course we know very little just now. The great thing is that we have discovered him. To-morrow, no doubt, we shall have him here, and then we shall know everything, and everything will be right."

Yes; this Marian herself believed. Arnold was found; to-morrow he would come and see her. Would he have any reproaches for her that she, albeit unwittingly, had brought all this trouble on him? But might not she also reproach him that he had given her all these miserable days? Ah! what mattered thinking? To-morrow she would see him, and it would be well with them both.

The streets were beginning to be dusky when Gilbert and the lieutenant were set down at the entrance to Wardour Street, whence Gilbert proposed they should make their way on foot. In a few minutes they came to the Restaurant Parisien, and went in.

"M'sieu' Lee? No, gent'men, he is not here," said madame.

"But he is living here, surely?" said Gilbert.

"*Hélas! Non, messieurs.* M'sieu' Lee live not here."

"This is the Restaurant Parisien, is it not?"

"But yes, gent'men. *Mais*, M'sieu' Lee, he live not at me 'ouse any more." And madame looked genuinely concerned.

"What do you mean?" said Gilbert. "Do you mean that he was living here, and has gone away?"

"*Hélas, oui!* it is that. Gent'men, I thing M'sieu' Lee ve'y sick. I thing he so sick indeed. I'm a sure of it. I thing it—"

"Sick? Very sick? But what makes you think that? Do you know it, or not?" said the lieutenant, wretchedly alarmed.

"Gent'men, it jus' this way," answered madame, drawing them into a quiet corner of the room. "I see since a fortnight that M'sieu' Lee he don't *h*eat. I spik at him, and say, 'M'sieu' Lee, w'y you don't *h*eat zeze time?' an' he say, 'Madame, I no got me my *h*appetite.' '*Mais*,' I say, 'you mus' *have* you *h*appetite; *h*eat like w'at you used,' I say, 'and pay me w'en you *h*abel.' Well, he *h*eat a leet'l mo', but it seem like it don' did him no good. *Eh bien*, one day he come an' say, 'Madame, I got me some headaches, and some colds of my legs; I go away a leet'l, and get me well.' I say, 'You mo' better stay w'ere you is,' M'sieu' Lee, an' I fetch the doctor at you.' *Mais non*, he say he know a doctor w'at like to take him in a whiles an' get him well, an' then he come back at me 'ouse. I thing that doctor mus' be the young doctor w'at used come some times, an' *h*eat his *petit souper* 'long wis M'sieu' Lee, *mais* he don' come no mo' since M'sieu' Lee go away, so I can' *h*ask him."

"Mr. Lee, then, is gone?"

"But yes, gent'men. He go away since four days, an' I not see him again.

Gilbert looked at the lieutenant, and the lieutenant returned his look, but neither of them spoke.

"Gent'men," said madame, "you are the friends of M'sieu' Lee?"

"Yes," answered the lieutenant—"yes, certainly we are. We came here very anxious to see him."

"Well, then, messieurs, I ve'y hangshus see him also. *Mais*, look, I thing I don' see that poor M'sieu' Lee any mo'."

"What do you mean?" said the lieutenant.

Madame lifted her shoulders expressively, and replied: "I thing poor M'sieu' Lee very sick."

To this the lieutenant made no reply, but he said: "We thank you, madame, for what you have told us. Perhaps you will see this doctor you speak of, and he may be able to tell you where Mr. Lee is. I will come to you again in

a day or two. Come," he added, gravely turning to Gilbert; "let us go; we have learned all that madame can tell us."

They quitted the restaurant, and bent their steps westward. There was a worse ordeal to come—namely, the telling to Marian what they had heard from madame.

The lieutenant looked quite woe-begone, and Reade went about to comfort him.

"My own opinion is," he said, "that our young friend has only played a ruse on us. He got wind somehow of what we were doing, and has gone off somewhere else; but probably close by, and we shall come upon him in a day or two at latest. We are, at any rate, on the track, which is more than we could say before."

"I don't know what Marian will say," was the lieutenant's reply.

"She is a sensible girl," said Gilbert, "and will take a sensible view of it."

"You will come home with me?" said the lieutenant, nervously, for Gilbert's fair broad shoulders were good to shelter behind.

But Gilbert liked that prospect no better than the lieutenant, and pleaded a late engagement elsewhere. They came within a stone's throw of his club, and he said a hasty good-night, promising to call early the next day.

The lieutenant, in a far from comfortable frame of mind, went on his way alone, and arriving at Mrs. Warren's house, found that lady eating a solitary supper in the dining-room.

"What news?" said Mrs. Warren.

The lieutenant sat down and passed his hands across his eyes, with a gesture that bespoke a world of disquiet within him, and looked at her without answering.

"Ah!" said Mrs. Warren, slowly; "you have not found him."

"And am not like to, I fear," answered the lieutenant.

"How is that? What do you mean, lieutenant?" said Mrs. Warren, growing alarmed in her turn.

The lieutenant began to tell her all that Gilbert and he had received from madame.

In the midst of his recital, Marian came in. She had caught a word or two at the door, and the expression which

came over the lieutenant's face when she entered the room, and their eyes met, told her the rest.

She became very pale, but said quietly enough to her uncle:

"You bring bad news, dear uncle?"

"Indeed, dear, I do not bring such good news as I had hoped to bring," he answered.

"You have not found Arnold, Uncle Lemuel?"

"No, dear, we were not fortunate enough to find him this evening."

"How was that?"

"Well, it seems he has gone from this place he was living at."

"Did you hear why he went?"

"We heard nothing positive. The landlady to be sure, had some notion that he was ill, and went away on that account. But it seems most unlikely that he would go away if he were ill, for this landlady—an elderly Frenchwoman, dear, and quite motherly in her manner—appears to have been kind to him, and would evidently have taken care of him in sickness. Mr. Reade suggests that Arnold, by some means or other, had come to know that we were looking for him, and has taken lodgings near by, that he might escape us for a time, and this I think is very probable."

"Very probable indeed; in fact, quite the most probable thing, my dear," said Mrs. Warren, in a confident tone.

"No," said Marian, "I think not. The landlady is right; he was ill, and he has gone—oh! where has he gone? No; we shall not find him now, we are too late. And I—I am all to blame." And her unnatural calm gave way, and she broke into violent sobbing, and this passed into hysteria.

They had much ado to get her to her room, and while Mrs. Warren was undressing her the fit came on again, and she was ill with hysterics half through the night.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE PETTY-CASH BOOK.

MASTER JARVIS, familiarly known to Mr. Trimble's clerks as Tomahawk, or the Boy Chief, found himself intrusted with new duties shortly after Mr. Jones's appointment to the office of manager.

Mr. Jones had many little idiosyncracies which he judged it well to keep from the knowledge of Mr. Trimble. He had never seen anything to be gained by a too punctilious attention to duty when his employer's back was turned, so the times when Mr. Trimble was not in the office were appropriated by Mr. Jones to purposes of his own.

But as Mr. Trimble had an awkward habit of coming in when least expected, it was found necessary to devise means whereby Mr. Jones might be saved from detection in any unprofessional occupation.

So Master Jarvis was named to the office of scout. He liked it, and he knew all about it, because he had read of scouts in his favorite books with red and yellow paper covers, and from these he had learned how to whistle in a soft and penetrating manner when the enemy came in sight.

He was posted at the outer door of the office one morning, a few days after the visit of Marian and the lieutenant to Mr. Trimble, and Mr. Jones was in his own room in a negligent attitude, studying his sporting journal, the "Morning Canter." He computed the odds and examined his betting book, and his purse, and then took from his desk the box containing the petty cash of the office, of which he had control.

He was thinking it would be as well there should be another payment on the petty-cash account when Master Jarvis gave the signal which heralded the approach of Mr. Trimble. Mr. Jones made haste to put his paper away, and seated himself at his desk.

Mr. Trimble passed on into his own room, and presently he rang his bell and asked for Mr. Jones. Mr. Jones closed the door behind him when he went in, as he always did. His caution in this matter was the result of memory of interviews held long ago in this same room, when Mr. Trimble had felt it necessary to address Mr. Jones in terms which wounded that gentleman's pride.

"Have you the petty-cash book?" inquired Mr. Trimble.

"Yes, sir," said Mr. Jones. "I was meaning to ask you for a payment on account of petty-cash this morning."

"Let me look at the book," said Mr. Trimble.

This was a very unusual demand; in fact, in Mr. Jones's time, it had never been made before. Mr. Trimble had

perhaps no special reason for asking to see the book, but the old feeling of distrust had grown in him again, and he had persuaded himself, not without grounds, that Mr. Jones's department required a little occasional supervision. Mr. Jones went out to fetch the book.

In the petty-cash book entries were made of disbursement for stamps and sundry small office expenses. Sometimes, when the cash-box was empty, Mr. Jones made these payments out of his own pocket, as his predecessors had been in the habit of doing, and occasionally, when the box had been replenished, he borrowed a sovereign for his own use, which his predecessors had *not* been in the habit of doing.

Taking the book out of his desk, he ran his eye hurriedly over the last page on which entries had been made, and noted one or two figures which gave him a momentary qualm. But there was no time to amend them, and Mr. Trimble's examination of the book was not likely to be critical.

"Here it is, sir," said Mr. Jones, presenting the book to Mr. Trimble.

Mr. Trimble took it and put it on one side, saying that he would look into it. This again was unusual, but Mr. Jones had no choice but to leave the book and retire.

He had no sooner left the room than Mr. Trimble took up the book and began to turn over the leaves. He did so indifferently at first, but presently his examination of the entries became closer, and at length he came to a page which, after scanning it carefully, he turned down, with an exclamation which was midway between a chuckle of triumph and a note of disgust. He found other similar pages, and turned them all down.

Then he rang his bell, and summoned Mr. Jones again.

"Some things here I don't understand," said Mr. Trimble.

"Indeed, sir; what are they?" inquired Mr. Jones, with an air which bespoke him ready to explain anything and everything.

"Do you make all these entries when the payments are made?" asked Mr. Trimble.

Mr. Jones assured the solicitor that that was his practice.

"How do you account for entries like these?" said Mr.

Trimble, and he showed a page of the book which contained the following amongst other entries:

	£	s.	d.
Stamps: Affidavits in Green *v.* Grey . .	0	7	6
Postages: Admiral Græme's audit notices .	0	17	0
Cabs	0	5	0
Stamps: To office copies, Green *v.* Grey .	0	7	6

The first and the fourth entries, it will be noticed, are in effect identical, and to these Mr. Trimble called Mr. Jones's attention.

"It almost looks as though I had made the same entry twice over, sir," said Mr. Jones, with a brave effort at a smile.

"It has that appearance to me," replied Mr. Trimble, dryly. "And how do you explain this?" he went on; "and this? and this?" And he showed three or four other pages which he had turned down, all bearing similar entries. "It almost looks as though you had made quite a number of entries twice over," said Mr. Trimble dryly.

"At first sight it certainly has that appearance, sir," answered Mr. Jones; "but it cannot really be so, for I am most careful in making the entries. If you will give me the book, sir, I will look into it at once, and see how the mistakes can have occurred."

"H'm! Well, no; you can leave the book with me. I'll send for you when I have done with it," said Mr. Trimble, and motioned Mr. Jones to leave the room.

Mr. Trimble paced up and down before his desk when he was left alone, then seated himself again, and devoted himself to a final examination of the petty-cash book. Before this was done he had fully resolved himself, and taking out his check-book, he observed when the last payment had been made to Mr. Jones, and wrote a check to that gentleman's order for his services to three months beyond the date.

Mr. Jones's day of grace had passed; he himself had written in the petty-cash book the order for his own dismissal.

Mr. Trimble's examination of the accounts had made it clear to him that Mr. Jones had commenced a series of thefts within a week of his appointment to the office of manager. They were the worst kind of thefts, little cowardly ones, which showed that the man had deliberately

used his employer's cash-box as his own privy purse—robbing steadily and stealthily without compunction.

By and by Mr. Jones came in again, and said smoothly, but with nervousness behind:

"I should be glad if you would let me look at the cash-book again, sir. I almost think that the notes from which the entries were made have become a trifle confused."

"I understood you to say," replied Mr. Trimble, "that your practice was to enter up the book as the payments were made."

"My general practice, sir. Oh, yes, certainly; but it happened now and then that I fell a little into arrears, and with the pressure of other business the notes would sometimes get disordered, but I can easily—"

Mr. Trimble made a gesture with his hand, and took up the check he had just written, and held it out to Mr. Jones.

"What does this mean, sir?" said Mr. Jones, nervously.

"It means," replied Mr. Trimble, "that after to-day I shall not trouble you to return to my office. It means that I have considered the terms of your engagement, and have written you a check for your services during the past calendar month, and for services during the next three months which I shall not require of you."

"I am to understand, then, sir, that you are dismissing me?" said Mr. Jones.

"That is perhaps the plainest way of putting it," answered Mr. Trimble.

"And without a hearing, sir?"

Mr. Trimble tapped the book which lay before him, and made no other answer.

Jones was a man who could act the braggart always, and the bully on occasion, up to a certain fixed point; but he had no foundations, and quickly collapsed.

He saw that his master had him fairly in the toils, and that neither the braggart nor the bully would avail him here. A moment's reflection sufficed him for a brief forecast of the future, and the forecast was not comforting. To be turned adrift at his age, without a character, meant beggary, or at least a return to that anonymous and backstairs existence, the discomforts of which he had proved in past years.

He had a third *rôle*, which he reserved for crises—that of the penitent suppliant.

He tried this now with the time-honored appeal of all cravens—"Won't you give me another chance, sir?"

But it was too late; and at the best of times Jones was not the man to call into play the sentimental side of Mr. Trimble's nature.

Then he fell back on the despairing heroic and said:

"Very well, sir, I leave you at once; and I can only hope that you will find another who will serve you as I have done."

"I hope that I shall not," answered Mr. Trimble; and had the occasion been lighter he would have chuckled at his own grim humor.

Mr. Jones was about to retire, with as much pride as he could muster, when Mr. Trimble stopped him.

"I have not done with you," he said shortly.

Mr. Jones hurriedly ran over the events of the past few weeks in his mind, but decided that the petty-cash book was the worst thing that could be brought against him.

"I put you into an office of trust," said Mr. Trimble, gravely, "and you have abused my confidence as none but a bad man would. You have played the part, Mr. Jones, of the petty thief. I should have had less contempt for you had you plundered my safe instead of pilfering shillings from my cash-box. But this is not all that I have to tax you with. Can you explain your conduct with regard to Mr. Lee?"

"Mr. Lee, sir?" stammered the culprit, who had long since decided to forget this episode in his career.

"You made certain statements in reference to Mr. Lee which I know now to be absolutely without foundation; to have been, indeed, so far removed from the truth, that they could only have sprung in a maliciously inventive mind, and could have none but a malicious purpose. There were certain papers of Mr. Lee's, you may recollect, which disappeared, and were subsequently found in rather mysterious circumstances. Did you ever put your hand to papers of Mr. Lee's?"

"I—I sometimes put his papers away, sir, when I found them about," answered Mr. Jones.

"Ah! from what I recollect of Mr. Lee's habits, I may say that you must have looked very keenly to find papers of his about. And when you did find them you must be credited with a high degree of ingenuity in putting them

away. Your knowledge of law, Mr. Jones, is not, I am sorry to say, what I once believed it to be, but I think it is sufficient to tell you that the discoveries I have made in this cash-book would enable me to place you in a position in which you would hardly care to stand. But I am desirous of avoiding all scandal in connection with my office, and if I find you showing a penitent mind by making exertions to discover Mr. Lee, I shall not do what it would otherwise be my duty to do—I mean in connection with your misconduct and these defalcations."

It was an opportunity to escape, and Mr. Jones was not slow to profit by it. He made a weak-kneed obeisance and went noiselessly out of the room. It was near the hour which he generally took for luncheon, so he made his exit unnoticed. The day wore on, and Mr. Jones did not reappear; still there were no questions, for Mr. Jones's habits were not those of his predecessors in the manager's chair.

There was no little curiosity, however, on the following day, when Mr. Jones's room remained without a tenant. It was not allayed, and by and by each of the clerks declared in turn that he had always believed Mr. Jones would leave in this way. Mr. Jones's face was never seen by them again.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

IN "HOPE" WARD.

THIS business dispatched, Mr. Trimble said: "I will be my own manager." He came down an hour earlier in the morning, and stayed an hour later in the evening, and very soon got tired of it.

He had reached the time of life when it is worse than uncomfortable to breakfast an hour earlier and dine an hour later than usual, and Mrs. and the Misses Trimble had occasion before long to complain of Mr. Trimble's resolve to do without a manager. He was perpetually out of sorts, and nothing was agreeable to him; and when at length he called for the dismissal of the cook, who had been fifteen years in his service, Mrs. Trimble put her foot down, metaphorically speaking, and insisted on her husband's taking to himself another manager.

"It is not the cook who is to blame, Rupert," said Mrs.

Trimble; "it is you. At your time of life you need an efficient helper in the office, and my own opinion is that nothing has succeeded with you since you dismissed poor Mr. Lee."

Mr. Trimble was privately of the same opinion, and he was also reminded that as yet he had been wholly unsuccessful in his efforts to find Arnold.

"I must take it in hand myself," he said, and he did so forthwith. He wrote to Mrs. Warren, and requested to be informed as fully as possible respecting Arnold's last disappearance. Mrs. Warren replied, and then Mr. Trimble sent a message requesting the favor of some further conversation with the lieutenant.

The lieutenant came, and being for the moment more concerned about Marian's state of health than about Arnold's non-appearance, he told Mr. Trimble what had occurred the other night, and added that her condition since that evening had been such as to occasion some anxiety to Mrs. Warren and himself.

"You must have her home again," said Mr. Trimble. "Meanwhile, let you and me look closely into this matter. Tell me precisely what you have done."

The lieutenant recounted the vain endeavors of Mrs. Warren, Gilbert, and himself, and Mr. Trimble looked at him through half-closed eyelids and listened.

When the lieutenant had finished Mr. Trimble said:

"It seems to me that the proper thing to do is precisely the thing which you have not done. You have made no inquiries at the hospitals; yet, from what you say, I feel little doubt that he is lying in some hospital at this moment. You tell me that he was last at this French restaurant in Soho. I make no doubt that he went straight from there to a hospital. The nearest hospital is the Central; we will inquire there this evening."

And to the Central Hospital they went in Mr. Trimble's brougham. Mr. Trimble, at the lieutenant's request, undertook the office of spokesman. He gave Arnold's name, and the date at which he would have been likely to claim admittance. The answer was that no such patient had been received in the hospital.

Mr. Trimble went over his story again, and received the same answer, but was told that he might, if he pleased, make application at the various wards. He did

so, in company with the lieutenant, but met with no better success.

"I am puzzled," said Mr. Trimble, as he and the lieutenant drove away from the hospital. "I had a conviction that our inquiries would have ended here. There can be little doubt that the poor fellow went away sick to some hospital—to which should he have gone if not to this, which is within a stone's throw of the place he was lodging at? If we knew the name of that dresser you speak of, whom he made acquaintance with at the restaurant, I fancy we should not have much further to seek."

They went to the restaurant and interviewed madame. But she had not seen the medical gentleman since M'sieu' Lee went away, and she had never known his name.

"We'll make a round of all the hospitals," said Mr. Trimble; and so they did, but were no nearer the object of their search than when they first set out.

The lieutenant was in despair, and Mr. Trimble did not conceal his annoyance.

They returned to the Central Hospital, and Mr. Trimble said he was certain that Arnold was there. The authorities were equally certain that he was not, and once more the seekers found themselves completely baffled.

The lieutenant lacked the nerve to sustain an inquiry of this sort, and he wearied the solicitor besides with his daily reports of the troubled state of Marian. Mr. Trimble saw that to work in peace he must work alone, so he told this frankly to the lieutenant, and repeated the expression of his belief that Marian would do better at home in this crisis than in London.

The lieutenant saw the drift of the solicitor's argument, and its wisdom; he got Mrs. Warren to support him, the result being that he and Marian went home again to Three Dykes.

"Now, then," said Mr. Trimble, "for another trial on fresh lines."

He went to the office of a well-known private-inquiry agent, in a side street leading out of the Strand, and was shown up immediately on sending in his card.

He was ushered into a room strongly resembling a certain inner chamber in Scotland Yard, which perhaps you have never visited.

The inquiry agent, an ex-policeman, was a lean, gray

man, with a somewhat clerical appearance, and a cast in his eye. The extensive and important nature of his business was indicated by the contents of the well-filled pigeonholes which made a kind of fortification around three sides of a table at which he sat. There were some police bills folded together in a bundle before him, and two hundred pounds was the smallest reward offered on any of them. The literature neatly bestowed in a case with glass doors, behind the inquiry agent's chair, was concerned almost exclusively with crime and criminals, and choice of its kind.

The solicitor and the detective bowed to one another, and Mr. Trimble took the chair that was offered him.

In a professional sense the men were related (though Mr. Trimble would have looked at you in a very unpleasant manner if you had ventured to tell him so), but in the actual practice of their respective callings they moved on widely different lines. They both saw more of the seamy than of the sound side of life, but the detective saw a seamier side than Mr. Trimble. He stood at the top of one of the queerest, ugliest, and least reputable professions under the sun, and in his leisure hours he collected butterflies and classified them in a scientific manner. He was an obsequious man, and would bite his nails when not otherwise engaged.

"What can I have the pleasure of doing for you, sir?" he inquired of Mr. Trimble, and as he spoke he carelessly unfolded a document wherein mention was made of a reward of one thousand pounds which would be given for information leading to the discovery of some one who was much wanted in connection with an interesting robbery of bonds. He did this by way of conveying a courteous reminder to Mr. Trimble that his business was not of the twopenny-halfpenny order.

Mr. Trimble unfolded some part of his mission, and the inquiry agent jumped at once to his own conclusion.

"Do you—ah!—do you intend to prosecute?" he said, feeling his way quietly.

"Certainly not," said Mr. Trimble. "Nothing is further from our intention."

"Won't prosecute!" answered the inquiry agent, and seemed disappointed.

"We simply desire to find the gentleman," said Mr. Trimble.

"To be sure," replied the inquiry agent, "to be sure. Rather grave case, though, as I gather from your remarks, sir; but family considerations, no doubt, and—and so on."

"You misunderstand me," observed Mr. Trimble, a little impatiently. "It is an ordinary case of disappearance, and the gentleman's friends are anxious to be in communication with him again; in fact, they desire to have him back."

But the inquiry agent was not satisfied. He knew Mr. Trimble, and felt sure that a solicitor of his standing would not be likely to concern himself so far as to call in person respecting "an ordinary case of disappearance." There was a mystery at the bottom of it which ought to be worth money.

Mr. Trimble saw what his man was driving at, and felt that he had come to the wrong place; but he knew the detective for the sharpest man in the profession, and assured that if any one could discover a lost sheep in the wilds of London this was the man, he cast aside reserve and told the case plainly.

It was well he did this, for the professor of the secret craft, appealed to in this manner, discovered some warmth of feeling under his professional veneer, and said at once that he would undertake the case.

When he said this, Mr. Trimble felt that the affair was as good as finished, and left the office of the inquiry agent well satisfied.

Arnold was now in a fair way to be tracked down, and the truth is that he himself was beginning to be weary of concealment. He asked himself what crime he had been guilty of that he should any longer play the truant. He knew that anxious hearts must be yearning for him at home; he burned for a sight of Marian, for the sound of her voice, for the touch of her hand. He was sick of toiling in the beggarly by-paths of journalism, he who knew himself capable of the best work of the profession he had learned. He would not have cared had they found him where he lay at that moment, but go he could not. Where, then, was he all this while?

It was half-past eight at night in the Hope Ward of the Central Hospital. The lights had been turned down, and

there was quiet around most of the beds. But at no time of the day or night is there absolute stillness in a hospital ward. Some of the patients were settling themselves comfortably to sleep, there were others who waited wearily for the sweet sleep of death. An occasional sigh, an impatient movement of the bed-clothes, a groan, or sometimes a sharp cry, told of the couch of pain.

The day-nurses, who had been on duty since seven in the morning, were getting ready to leave the wards, the night-nurse would be at her post in half an hour.

By and by a door opened at one end of the ward, and the Sister of the ward, in her high starched cap and apron, came in with her Bible and prayer-book to read prayers.

There was a lecturn against the wall, and a shaded lamp above it. She placed her books here, and the light fell on her quiet figure, and everywhere else in the room it was dark. She read a part of a chapter, and then knelt down and said a prayer out of her book, and from several of the beds there came muttered responses.

Then the Sister rose, and said, "Good-night to you all," and retired.

There was one bed over which a nurse, seated beside it, kept close watch. Presently there was a change in the patient, which the nurse was quick to note. She bent over the bed and listened, and then made a sign to another nurse, who left the ward immediately. In a few minutes she returned, and a doctor with her.

A screen was drawn around the bed, and when this was done every one knew that death was taking place behind it. It was soon and quietly over; and by and by a sheet was thrown over the corpse, and it was lifted noiselessly out of the ward; and the next morning the rest of the patients knew no more than that a bed was vacant for another comer.

In the next bed to this lay Arnold, his rest broken for the night.

He was just recovered of a low fever. Taken in the nick of time, and under good treatment, it had proved a trifling matter, though enough to have given him his quietus had he moped on at the Restaurant Parisien.

He was up and about again now, and as he lay awake that night he counted the days until they would give him his discharge.

When he went into the hospital, his friend the dresser, with nice feeling, had suggested that he might, if he liked, enter under an assumed name; and this, along with the unusual and more or less private nature of his admission, was the reason why Mr. Trimble and the lieutenant had twice been sent away unsatisfied when they inquired for him at the hospital.

Life flowed easily, and on the whole not disagreeably, in this huge sick-house. For the most part, somebody had just died or was on the point of dying; but so many went there (to the medical wards in particular, as distinguished from the surgical) who had no other end in view, that death came to be classed almost amongst the commonplaces of the ward.

A hundred things came across the day to save it from dullness; and if other topics failed, one could always fall back on his own or his neighbor's case, and I promise you they enjoyed this as much as anything. Thus, Number Five, when he had set down his mug at breakfast-time, would turn over on his side and spend a comfortable half-hour discussing with Number Four the change he felt in himself since the previous night, and Number Four would listen and proceed to unfold his own condition, and then Number Five would turn over on the other side and tell Number Six how he and Number Four were this morning; and I can assure you this was very comfortable conversation, and not at all tedious. The doctor came in and made his round, sometimes a hurried and sometimes a leisurely one, with a posse of students at his heels, and the patients whose cases presented uncommon features felt a mild gratification, not unmixed with pride, when the doctor made a pause beside them and began, "Now, I want you to look carefully at this case."

The chaplain came in his turn, and sometimes a policeman, to inquire after a patient whose attendance was needed elsewhere when the hospital could spare him.

Persons of a sentimental or philosophical turn interested themselves in the progress of the flirtation—which never interfered with business—between the junior nurse and Arnold's friend, the dresser, the latter of whom looked in from his own surgical ward oftener than he need have done, on pretense of inquiring after Arnold, but everybody saw through this. A consumptive florist's assistant, who lay in

one of the beds, said he would take care they had plenty of flowers when the day came, but in the meanwhile the poor fellow died.

Arnold was looked after quite well enough, though I do not know but it was owing partly to the junior nurse's regard for the dresser that he had his bread-and-butter cut thinner than the others, and a spoon to stir his tea with.

But these favors were not grudged him by the rest of the patients, for as soon as he got on his legs he made himself very brisk and companionable, reading the murders and marriages and mortality reports out of the daily paper, and helping the nurses round with the mugs at tea-time.

Arnold was a mere number here, like the rest of them, and had a blue paper pinned up over his bed, with his case written out and some hieroglyphs by the doctor relating to medicine and diet. They were giving him port-wine now, and a good brand too, and he shared it surreptitiously with Number Nine, who had disease of the spine, and was at present in no great hurry to get rid of it.

Arnold was less content than Number Nine. One who finds himself in the hospital, being suddenly stricken down by disease after spending the best years of his life between a noisome workshop and a home in a three-pair back in a dirty court, is not always in a hurry to be sent out of it. He is sick, but sickness in a London hospital is better than health in some London homes. He breathes a clean air, he is fed with cleanly food, he has cleanly and soft hands to wait on him, and he hears cleanly voices in his ear all day. He is married, perhaps, and has children, and a life of pinching here and battling there has not made him so selfish but that he is anxious to be free again to use his arm for them; but for himself he is better in the hospital than out of it, and would as lief as not see the screen drawn about his bed, which is a certain sign there that one is a claimant for a deal coffin.

But Arnold was yet of the quick in all senses. He had had some small buffetings, but they had done little to knock the heart out of him. He was of good stuff and could endure plenty of weather. It irked him every day that he was still a prisoner. As much as anything else he had needed rest of mind, and now that he had had this perforce, he began to feel both mind and body expand again; he was pricked with the desire to work; he felt that

he had toiled amiss and to no purpose; he should not have hidden himself; he wanted to get out again and once more put himself to the front.

He worried the nurse and the doctor to pronounce him well, and he was just now asking himself whether he would not be justified in going straight to Trimble and showing him that both of them had acted foolishly, and bidding Trimble undo the injustice he had done him. He was of this mind on the day that Mr. Trimble went to set the private-inquiry agent on his track.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE TWO LOVERS.

THE poet Bell, and the dresser who was in love with the junior nurse, were solid friends to Arnold in the days when he was warded. Some natural curiosity was allied to the interest they felt in him. The dresser had been acquainted with Arnold only since his low-water days, but he knew that causes removed from the common must have conspired to bring him under. Bell and Arnold were friends of old standing, but Bell had been no more in Arnold's confidence than anybody else respecting the real reasons of his quarrel with Mr. Trimble and his subsequent and consequent misfortunes. Arnold had kept as close as ship's timber, and all his friends could say was that something bad had happened. Bell knew Arnold and trusted him, and so did the dresser when Bell had talked to him. These two made friends over Arnold's bed, and after that Bell was in and out continually, for the hand-maiden whom the dresser loved allowed him free entry on days when other visitors were not admitted. It was a most fortunate thing for everybody that the dresser and the junior nurse were in love with one another. It gave the patients something to gossip about, it procured Arnold thin bread-and-butter for his tea, and the poet the privilege of coming and going in the ward as he pleased: nothing could have been better.

The dresser's curiosity respecting the gentleman patient whom he had taken to friend was still further provoked when it came to his ears that two persons had been making per-

sistent inquiries at the hospital for a patient, who, as they described him, could be none other than Arnold. He learned that they had been twice, and that at the second time they had with difficulty been turned away, one of them expressing himself certain that the patient inquired for was at the Middlesex Hospital and nowhere else. He asked whether Arnold had been communicated with, and was told that he had not, and the dresser began to wonder whether he had done right in recommending Arnold to enter under a false name. For the present, however, he said nothing to Arnold, but he resolved to talk to Bell.

Bell came in that evening and was full of talk about the new law journal, which he said he had a shrewd suspicion that Arnold might edit when he was fit to put the harness on again.

"And that," answered Arnold, "is not many days off, I can tell you, old fellow."

When Bell was going away, the dresser came in and said he had just put a man comfortable who had had his leg broken in eleven places, and it had given him an appetite for supper. He proposed that Bell should go with him to sup at the French restaurant, where one might feast Pantagruelistic fashion, and his purse not shrink much over the reckoning.

"By the way," said Arnold, "how's madame? If I'd had any decent feeling about me I'd have sent her a word before this, for she quite believed I was going away to die, and she cried some good tears over me. But you've told her I'm not a grave man yet, I dare say, one of you?"

"Why, now I come to think of it," said Browne, the dresser, "I haven't been there since we put you up, Lee—have you, Bell?"

"To my sorrow, no," answered the poet; "for the old marquis in the kitchen has a delicate skill in cutlets."

"Come along then," said the dresser, "we'll go and comfort madame about Lee here."

Madame pounced on them at once for news of her friend.

"Zat po' M'sieu' Lee, w'at you make wis him?" queried madame, anxiously, when she proffered the slate on which the dishes for the day were pencilled. Bell assured her that they had left Arnold comfortably tucked in for the night not ten minutes before.

"He got some fevers, I think, hey, po' M'sieu' Lee?" said madame.

"Oh, he's done with fevers," answered Bell. "You'll have him round here for *côtelettes aux champignons* in a day or two."

"I tell you, gent'men, M'sieu' 'ave *côtelettes aux champignons*, or w'atever else he like, jus' so soon w'at he come at me 'ouse, and I don' care noding 'bout ze bill, needer don' me 'usban'. I tell you I glad M'sieu' Lee don' die zis-a-while; an', gent'men, 'ave you know zat M'sieu' been hask for? *Mais oui*, it jus' so w'at I tell you. Zere is two gent'men call at me 'ouse w'en M'sieu' Lee gone since tree days, an' zey 'ave say zey want him. An' I say 'Gent'men, you can' see M'sieu' Lee 'cause he not of me 'ouse any mo' zis time,' an' I tell you zey are *fâchés* w'en I say zat. You know who zose gent'men be, sairs? Zose gent'men am frens of M'sieu' Lee, *mais* zey not come since a good w'iles now."

Bell asked the dresser if he knew anything of this, and Browne said he had been meaning to talk to Bell about it, for two gentlemen had been inquiring at the hospital for a patient who could be none other than their friend.

"Did you see them?" asked Bell.

"No," said Browne, "but they were described to me;" and he gave Bell the descriptions of the visitors which he had had from the porter at the hospital.

Bell did not recognize the descriptions, but said he thought it would be as well to let Lee know.

"I rather fancy," he said, "that one of them is Trimble. Trimble was his governor, and, as I believe, at the bottom of all the mischief. It was he who put Lee into this fix; at least, that's what I believe. He's penitent now, I expect, and Lee might as well know it. What do you think of him? Will he be fit again soon?"

"We could send him out in a week," answered Browne.

"Ah! then it's quite time we began to make a bed for him outside. He has been keeping out of sight of his friends for a long while past, but we must have him amongst them again. I must tell Reade."

"Who is Reade?"

"A friend of the family. They set Reade to hunt him up a long time ago, but just after I had found him by chance one day, and put Reade on his track, he dived into

the hospital and told me, when he wrote to me from there, not to let Reade know where he was."

"Yes," replied the dresser; "but it won't do to let him go hiding again, to live the life he was leading before I brought him here, or we should have him in a second time, and then it would be 'good-night!' You had better tell Reade."

"I'll do so, without mentioning it to Lee. But we'll tell Lee, I think, of madame's gentleman; the same, no doubt, whom you heard of at the hospital."

They made this communication to Arnold on the following day, and he knew at once by the descriptions Browne gave him that the two inquirers were the lieutenant and Mr. Trimble.

The knowledge that Mr. Trimble was looking for him was a gratification as well as a surprise to Arnold. It was a very considerable surprise, and it showed him that Trimble's feelings had undergone a revolution of some sort since the morning when he and his old chief had exchanged their exceeding frosty farewells.

Trimble knew the truth then at last? This could hardly be doubted; but how had it been conveyed to him, and by whom? Curious and interesting queries, but Arnold could fetch no answer to them.

Upon one point, however, he was able now to give himself comfortable assurance, namely—that on the strength of the knowledge that had just come to him he need no longer hesitate to go to Trimble, for Trimble now was assuredly aware of the bitter injustice he had done him in the matter of the bankruptcy.

Bell went to the club that night in the hope of seeing Reade, but Reade was not there. So, over a trifle of supper, our poet composed a letter, in which he said that if Reade were still looking for their friend Lee, he could save him further expenditure of shoe-leather, for he knew, and would tell him, where Lee was. He considered this information cheap at the price of a dinner, and proposed that Reade should come and pay for the same at the club the next evening.

Now Gilbert had begun to despair of finding Arnold, and various feelings were struggling in him at the time when Bell's letter arrived. Suppose that Lee had disappeared for good, as seemed to him not impossible. Was

there a chance that another might come to take the place of Lee in Marian's heart? Might he be that other—next year, or ever?

Then came the letter of Bell, and dashed his hopes for the hundredth and last time.

He sat down and accepted Bell's proposal.

He was at the club at the hour named the next evening, and heard Bell's recital.

He thanked Bell, and asked why he had not told him this sooner. Bell answered that he had been silent out of regard for Lee's own wishes; and then they fell to talking over the whole affair, and Bell told Reade some things about Arnold which he had not known before, and Reade told Bell some things which were new to him.

And when Reade had learned as much as Bell knew touching Arnold's experiences of the past few months, he felt a warmth of heart toward him, and something of admiration, and spoke out like the good fellow he was.

"There is fine stuff in him," said Reade.

"Don't you see the meaning of it all? He has gone through this to save her, in the first place, and to shield her, in the second. A woman might love a man like this.

"But does she love him?" said Bell.

Gilbert answered by recounting somewhat of Marian's recent conduct; as much as might be said without unkindly betraying her; and the poet replied:

"Yes, sir, yes. I take these to be amongst the symptoms and expressions of love, a thing which you and I, my dear friend, are sensible enough to appreciate only in the abstract. As a poet, perhaps, I know a little more about the passion than you do; but I think none the worse of you, and, if you will give me leave, I will request them to bring us some coffee."

"Do you think I might call on him at the hospital?" asked Reade, when they had adjourned to the smoking-room.

"I think you might," answered Bell. "The visiting days are—but no matter for the visiting days, you don't want to go in amongst the crowd. There's a pretty nurse there who has, I believe, some small regard for me, and a word from me will procure your admission whenever you like."

Bell, in fact, said a word to the junior nurse on the fol-

lowing day, and smiled his best in saying it; but the young lady perked up her nice starched cap, and told him the days appointed for visitors, and said that on no other day were strangers allowed in the ward.

The poet went, somewhat crest-fallen, to young Mr. Browne, the dresser, and that gentleman also spoke a word in the ear of the junior nurse. On this occasion there was no perking of caps, nor allusion to the regular days for visitors; and Reade was privately informed that he might visit Number Three, in Hope Ward, on whatever day and at whatever hour he pleased. Such a useful as well as beautiful thing it is when a dresser and a junior nurse are in love with one another.

You may be sure that when this permission had been given it was not long before Gilbert found himself knocking at the door of Hope Ward. Arnold knew nothing of his coming, but he recognized at once the pleasant-faced, handsome man with the straight back, who inquired of the nurse in charge whether he could see Mr. Lee.

It was late in the afternoon, tea had just been served, there was a roaring fire in the wide grate, and its light played over the bare scoured floor, and over the texts in red and blue letters on the wall.

Arnold, who was sitting over the fire, got up as Reade approached. He was pale, and his features somewhat shrunken; but altogether he looked rather better than otherwise for his stay in the hospital, and his figure had lost but little of its elasticity.

"Don't think me an intruder, please," said Reade; "but I heard from our friend Bell that you were warded here, and—well, the truth is," he went on, laughing, "I am the holder of a sort of commission from friends of yours in the country who are anxious for news of you, and asked me to —to look you up."

"And you've had some difficulty in finding me, eh?" smiled Arnold.

"Well, yes, it's a fact, I have," answered Reade; and they both had a laugh over it.

"You see," said Arnold, "when a man gets under the wind he doesn't much care to show his face amongst his friends—at least I don't, and—but perhaps you know pretty nearly as much as I could tell you."

"Bell and I had some talk at the club last night," said Reade by way of reply.

"Ah! Dick's an uncommon chatterbox; but, after all, I'm not sorry you met him."

"Since you say that," said Reade, "I may answer that I am very glad I did. My dear Lee, I have heard most of the story, in part from the lieutenant and in part from Bell, and all I can say is that you have acted like a thorough good fellow, except," he added—"except, perhaps, during these few weeks past."

The nurse came up in her nice starched cap and bib, with a great mug of tea in her hand, and said the afternoon tea-set had gone to be mended, and asked Reade if he would take some tea.

Reade said he disliked nothing so much as a small tea-cup, and that tea out of a pint mug was a pleasure he had always looked forward to.

The nurse said she would fetch him some slices of thick bread-and-butter if he liked, and Gilbert replied that the caps worn by the nurses in this hospital were prettier than he had seen anywhere else.

"Have you been warded, then?" asked the nurse.

"No, but I should not mind being warded here," said Reade; and the nurse cut the bread-and-butter quite thin.

"Why do you make that exception?" asked Arnold, when this interlude, which ought never to have occurred, was over.

"You would not ask," answered Gilbert, "if you had heard lately of your friends at Three Dykes."

"They have missed me, then?" said Arnold, and looked wistfully at Reade as he spoke.

"My dear fellow, think of it! Missed you! You disappear, and leave no trace of yourself. You do not write to your friends, and you do your best to baffle every effort of theirs to find you. When a man gives his friends the go-by in this complete fashion, they sometimes hear no more of him until they recognize the description of a body fished one night out of the Thames. What was to prevent the Thames from being in the thoughts of your friends at Three Dykes all these weeks? Missed you, my dear fellow!"

"Yes," said Arnold; "yes, I ought to have sent them word before now. Have you seen them lately?"

"The lieutenant and Miss Dean were in town until a few days ago."

"Was it on my account they were here?"

"You can believe it. And they went home again none too readily, I can tell you, and with cold comfort; for after thinking they had found you awhile back, you disappeared again more completely than ever."

"And you saw Miss Dean and the lieutenant a few days ago?" said Arnold, after a pause.

"I saw them off for the West on Monday."

"They were well? Miss Dean was well?"

"Ah, you have not seen her since she returned from Madeira. Well, think of a rose half slain by the drought and then restored to ten times fuller life. When I left Miss Dean with my aunt at Madeira, on my way to the Cape, I wondered whether I should ever see her again; I wonder now how I could have so wondered."

There was a suggestion in Reade's tones of emotion kept under by an effort. Arnold stole a glance at him, and thought he could not be mistaken. A jealous pang shot through him. The man spoke with ardor; what right he to do so?

"I called at Madeira again on my way home from the Cape," said Reade, "and my aunt, Mrs. Warren, was good enough to invite me to remain there for a while. We had some pleasant expeditions, and I was able to show Miss Dean a good deal of the island."

"It was very kind of you," said Arnold. "You remained with them some time?"

"I brought them home again to England."

Arnold felt puzzled and uncomfortable. Perhaps Gilbert perceived some sudden small change in his manners, for he went on:

"Miss Dean and I became capital friends in Madeira, and she was kind enough to say, when we bade good-bye the other day, that she hoped we should remain so. I'll let you into a secret, Lee. It is for Miss Dean that I hold this little commission I spoke to you of. Oh, yes, you will find Miss Dean a great deal better."

Arnold silently put out his hand, and the other took it and grasped it; and two men who had been rivals were strong friends from that hour.

"And now," said Reade, when he rose to go, "I have a

pleasant business to put in hand; I am going to send our friends at Three Dykes better news than they have had for some time. I am going to tell them that I have found you, and I shall add that you will not be long in following my letter. I may say that, Lee?"

"You may," said Arnold, "and you may tell them also that you are a good fellow."

"I will tell them also that I am a good fellow," answered Reade; and as he went out of the ward the junior nurse put her nice starched cap out of the ward kitchen and made him a professional bow, which is demure though pretty.

This little lady (you will be glad to know that she was married to Mr. Browne, the dresser, at Christmas, whereby the hospital lost a good nurse) began to think there was no end to the people who called at Number Three, for late the same evening a lean gray man with a cast in his eye came to the ward and asked if Mr. Arnold Lee was there.

The nurse did not like the look of this person, so she told him it was neither the day nor the hour for visitors, and that Mr. Lee had been an hour or more in bed. But the gray man, who was obsequiously polite (and always looked as if he had just lost his way from the Bow Street Police Court and wanted to get back there again), assured the nurse that he had no desire to disturb the slumbers of Mr. Lee; he was merely making the inquiry for another party.

The gray man, who will be recognized for the private-inquiry agent, went back to his office in the neighborhood of the Strand and wrote a note to Mr. Trimble; and at noon on the following day a letter from Mr. Trimble came for Arnold.

It was brief but kind. Mr. Trimble said that he had been in communication with and had seen friends of Arnold's; that some mistake—some grave mistake, perhaps—had been made, and that if Arnold was not well enough to call upon Mr. Trimble, Mr. Trimble would call upon Arnold.

Arnold asked when he could have his discharge. They told him that in two days he might leave the hospital. On the third day he took leave of the cripples he had lodged with (but they were drawing the screen around the bed of one of them), of the nurses, the Sister, the doctor, and his

good friend Mr. Browne, the dresser (Arnold subsequently stood best man to Mr. Browne), and quitting the hospital, called a cab, and was driven to the office of Trimble and Trimble.

He cast a curious look around, stayed a moment to receive the greetings of his old associates, wondered where Jones was, and was ushered by Master Jarvis into Mr. Trimble's sanctum.

Mr. Trimble rose from his desk immediately, and said as he came forward:

"My dear Lee, I am very glad to see you."

"And I, sir," said Arnold, "am exceedingly glad to see you."

"We ought never to have parted," said Mr. Trimble.

"It was no wish of mine that we should do so, sir," answered Arnold.

And then there not unnaturally ensued a slightly awkward pause, during which Mr. Trimble motioned Arnold to a seat.

"I have seen friends of yours, Lee," said Mr. Trimble. "I have seen Lieutenant Dean, and Miss Dean, and Mrs. Warren—a very charming young lady; Miss Dean I mean, of course, though Mrs. Warren is a lady for whom I can not but feel great respect. I have heard the whole story, Lee, and though I still think that you might have been more candid with me, I am convinced that you acted from high and, indeed, noble motives, and that great injustice was done you. That injustice, however, is not irreparable. You stand here with a character unstained, for your bankruptcy—of which I think with genuine pain—has been annulled. Don't thank me, the annulling of it has been but the commonest justice."

"No, sir," answered Arnold; "it is the completest possible justice; and I thank you for it."

Mr. Trimble made a deprecatory motion with his pen, and went on:

"But I must say, Lee, that I think you have done wrong in putting it out of the power of your friends to communicate with you all these weeks. Your friends at home have suffered the keenest distress. I understand, I think, and to some extent appreciate your motives; but it was not right. Now that I have seen you, I shall send a telegram to them at once. But now as to the future. You are already in

actual fact reinstated in the profession. I have by me a letter from Mr. Seeling, of the firm of Seeling and White, offering you a position there similar to the one you held latterly with me. It is open to you to accept it unconditionally or not, as you please; and if you feel any compunction about returning here, I think you could not do better than take this position. But—well, Lee, you know I am not too anxious to assist in a transfer of your services elsewhere. I am growing old, and have no son. I would propose that, instead of starting afresh in another place, you should remain with me for a year in your former position, at the end of which time we might perhaps conclude a more advantageous arrangement by your consenting to become my partner."

It need scarcely be said that this was a great deal more than Arnold had looked for, and perhaps it is not necessary to add that he showed a proper spirit of gratitude in accepting, not Mr. Seeling's offer, but Mr. Trimble's.

"First, however," said Mr. Trimble, "you had better go down to Three Dykes and hear what your friends have to say about it. I think I may safely predict a warm welcome for you there. A very charming girl certainly; I mean Miss Dean."

You would hardly have supposed that Mr. Trimble could throw so much meaning into a glance as he did when he said this.

CHAPTER XL.

THE LETTER.

LIEUTENANT DEAN and his niece were taking some turns in their small front garden, which sloped away from the cottage, and showed you wide white fields spread to the sky, and glistening hills beyond. Fields white and hills that glistened, because the winter had come early, and whether you liked the snow or not, it was there.

The lieutenant and Marian were taking some turns on the walk which the lieutenant had just cleared with the help of a broom, and I do not say that either of them thought the world more than commonly beautiful that morning, but if either did it was not Marian. For Marian was thinking that as there was snow at Three Dykes

there was probably snow in London, and as she did not know what kind of shelter, if any, Arnold was furnished with, the untimely arrival of winter made her unhappy.

There was not much talk between them, for the poor lieutenant had used up all his consolatory arguments, and for a week past had been as dry as the well. As for Marian, her looks belied the assurances of health renewed with which Gilbert had cheered Arnold over the hospital fire, and if her looks were dreary they were like her words.

They had but very lately returned home, yet to Marian it seemed an age, for no news had been received.

They walked up and down a good while in silence, until Marian felt that she must say something, and being a very natural girl, who could not speak charitably when she did not feel charitable, she said the garden looked worse under snow than in any other garb.

Now the lieutenant thought it looked better, but forbore to say so. The lieutenant's garden, in its general character, resembled the vicar's house, and the vicar's garden might be compared to the lieutenant's house. In his house the lieutenant loved method, but in his garden he liked nature to run wild; and he loved to see a rose-bush straggling over a path, and a deserted corner where the gardener had left the cabbages and the gooseberry-bushes trespass on the province of the flowers. The vicar did not care a small alms whether his study were ever put tidy from January to December; indeed, when Ann Hanoch took to hand to reduce it to order, which she generally did in the spring, there were often some peppery words between them, ending, as like as not, in the parson's giving her a week's notice, which she never accepted. But in the garden he was a martinet; not a twig out of place, and the lawn so closely shorn that a lean goose could not have made four bites off it. When the snow came it hid the trimness of the vicar's garden, as it did also the something less than trimness of the lieutenant's. This, at any rate, was the opinion of the lieutenant, but he forbore to express it, when Marian in an ungentle moment gave utterance to an opposite sentiment.

The postman came in sight upon the road, and the lieutenant—I am not saying that he was looking for a chance to escape—said he would go and meet him. Marian said she would not, for the postman never brought any letters from London.

The lieutenant went down the road and returned with a letter in his hand. He opened it as he walked, and read it through hastily. The expression of his face changed, but he said nothing.

Marian was waiting for him at the gate, and he gave the letter silently into her hand. Her color deepened as she recognized the handwriting. The lieutenant went on into the house and left Marian alone.

She read the letter not so quietly as the lieutenant had done, for a cry escaped her lips before she had reached the first full-stop.

There is a pretty fairy-tale whereof the hero is a cynical man to whom a little girl in a ragged dress gives a present of a moss rose. Many men, cynical and otherwise, had had moss roses given to them before, and sometimes by young ladies whose dresses were of the best fashion; but there never was a moss rose like this one. For this was a fairy rose, and, fairy-like, it changed the heart of the cynical man. It brought light into his life, it filled the air with perfume, it charmed him. It made the world seem gay and habitable, he walked along smiling and smiled on; and because he could not understand the meaning of the change that had been wrought in him, he inquired of a mouse who lived with him in his lodgings, and the mouse said that this was the famous Illusion rose, every leaf of which represented a certain sum of confidence and hope, and the fairest and the softest of the leaves stood for Love.

Now, this letter which the lieutenant had put into Marian's hand became to her in a moment what the moss rose had become in a moment to the cynical man. It produced exactly the same effects in her heart, and what these effects were I have told you.

She went into the house with cheeks as pink as a moss rose, and a soft light beaming in her eyes. Her uncle was there, and he, too, looked very well content.

She kissed him, and asked if he forgave her, and he said that he was past the age when his little niece need ask forgiveness of him for anything.

"Uncle Lemuel," said Marian, "you want a new coat, and you must have one."

"I have worn this for ten years," replied the lieutenant, "and the tailor is dead who made it."

"There are always plenty of tailors," said Marian, "and you must have a new coat, Uncle Lemuel, at Christmas."

"At Christmas, my dear! Will it be at Christmas, then?"

If you ask me what the lieutenant meant by it "it," I can not tell you.

Now, this letter was written by Gilbert Reade on the night before he went to see Arnold at the Central Hospital. It merely said that he had at last, to a certainty, found Arnold, and that he was going to see him that night.

Before post-time that evening Marian had sat down and wrote a long letter to Gilbert. It was such a letter as a true and open-hearted girl writes to a man who has deeply befriended her, whom she trusts absolutely, and for whom she feels such love as all but her chosen lover might envy. Need it be said that Gilbert's eyes were the only ones, save hers, which ever read, or ever will read, that letter? It became to Gilbert the dearest thing he had, and for him its value was never recalled. Marian and he did not meet again until Gilbert's hair and beard were tinged with gray; but time nor space affects not a friendship such as theirs.

CHAPTER XLI.

THERE WAS A FINE MOON THAT NIGHT.

On the day following a second letter was received from Reade. He had seen Arnold, and gave a full account of his interview with him at the hospital. He added that he believed Arnold would be with his friends in time to make the letter he was posting of no great interest.

They waited at home two days, and three, but Arnold had not come.

Marian asked a little petulantly what this should mean; and the lieutenant, who knew that there could be no real cause for anxiety now, said he did not know, but that as Arnold had but lately quitted a sick-bed he was no doubt acting under medical orders.

And the lieutenant, as we have seen, was quite right. It was not until the third day from Reade's visit that Arnold saw Mr. Trimble. Mr. Trimble had said to him when he was leaving, "I shall telegraph to your friends to expect you immediately."

"Very well, sir," said Arnold; "I hope to be able to go down to-morrow."

He wrote to Reade, who met him at the station the next day. There was a quarter of an hour to wait for the train, and they spent it in close and intimate talk. Arnold learned then for the first time what part Gilbert had played in the small drama that was just drawing to a close.

"But for you, and these lucky misfortunes of yours, old fellow," laughed Reade, "I think I might have won her."

Arnold looked at the handsome face and brave figure of the man, and thought that fortune had been more than kind to him, and a good deal less than kind to Reade. *Il y en a toujours un autre*, and Arnold wondered how it came that he and not Gilbert had been chosen the "other."

"Well, jump in," said Reade—"unless you want to send me down in your place. What a welcome I should get, eh! What am I going to do? Oh, I may take a trip somewhere next week. Look to hear of me in a month or two amongst the Cambodians or Kamschatkans. Good-bye, and a pleasant ending to your journey."

They had but time to grip hands, and the train moved on out of the station. But Reade's face, kindled and glowing with the fine, unselfish sympathy of his noble nature, haunted Arnold during a good half of his journey. Then he lay back in the carriage and surrendered himself to strange thoughts and feelings in which there was neither shape nor order.

He was returning to his friends a rehabilitated man. He had kept the bond he had made with himself, which was that he would not see them again until he could do so with character and fortune restored. The magician who dwelt (from ten to five, Sundays excepted) in Bedford Row and summoned his genii with a silver hand-bell had helped him to both these ends, and that in so brief a space of time that Arnold was still three parts lost in wonder at the suddenness and completeness of the transformation. He hardly believed in himself or his happiness; all that had happened in the last two or three days was more difficult to realize than the changing features of the scenes through which the train was hurrying him. But stranger than anything else was the thought that in a few hours he would be face to face with Marian. What a tumult this made at his heart! And the words of Gilbert Reade kept singing in his ears

that it was from Marian he held that commission of his. His senses reeled for very bliss.

But in the lover's as in the Pilgrim's Progress the meads and flowered paths are beset with pitfalls; there is the high, sharp hill, and Doubting Castle, and the way of burrs and briers, and the place of fogs and quagmires, and the hirelings of the enemy are on the watch to harass the traveler.

Arnold's imaginings were not all rose-tinted that blissful journey. He was nursing hopes too high for fulfillment, he doubted. He recalled one of her letters from Madeira which had made him unquiet because it was kind and nothing more, and—but the young man really could not make himself unhappy, so he gave up trying.

The day wore on, and when the fast train was exchanged for the local one, the pace fell off; but Arnold, though impatient, did not grumble, he had plenty to think about. They stopped at wayside stations, and took up railroad laborers and fishwives by the dozen, but Arnold was in a generous mood, and thought that no doubt there was room for everybody. It was desperately cold, but he tightened his rug about him, and recalled with a grim laugh the chill nights in the attic of the Restaurant Parisien.

At length the train rounded the bend of the hill, and drew up at the little windy barn where Arnold was to alight.

A very fat man called Job, who drove a coach and had opinions about the malt-tax, stood by his horses outside the station, indulging contemptuous thoughts about railway porters, and ghosts, and postmen who rode on bicycles.

When this fat man saw Arnold appear at the station-door, he left off abusing in fancy the people whom he did not like, eyed him for a moment or two with an air of incredulity, and then broke out into demonstrations of welcome.

"Way, Maister Arnul', haow be yew? Haven a seed yew these twelvemonth a'most. Way, haow be yew, Maister Arnul', zur?"

And when Arnold and he had mounted to the box, and they had driven off, Job went on asking him haow he did, and giving him an occasional clap on the shoulder with his great mittened hand, which you can think made Arnold feel that there was no place like home.

And then Job started to tell him of the people who had died or gone bankrupt during the year, and the landslip

that had occurred on the coast, and the foot-and-mouth disease that had carried off the best of Jan Vinch's heifers, and anything else that he thought would be likely to make Arnold regret the months he had spent in London. Finally, he stopped the coach in the middle of the road to give himself room to sneeze; and when he had sneezed until the coach began to rock, and the trees swayed on either side of the road, he explained that he had gatten a coold en es 'ead.

"You seem to have a bad one, Job," said Arnold.

"Did yew iver hev any o' them venelators atap yewr 'at, Maister Arnul'?" asked Job, in response.

No, Arnold said, he had never had a hat with a ventilator; and he felt surprised that at a moment like this Job could furnish no more suitable topic.

"I gatten a new 'at dree weeks agan," said Job, "an' cuden tell nohaow wut maide me zo coold atap my 'ead. A' last I vound et wis thikey there venelator, zo I tuk an' clapt tu ur dree 'ankerchers inzide, bit yer zee I'd gatten tha coold a'ready. I wuden wear a 'at wi' venelators, Maister Arnul', ef I wis yew," concluded Job.

"Yes, Job, yes, an excellent thing a ventilator in one's hat, I am certain," answered Arnold.

But he spoke abstractedly, and it seemed as if he were not listening. At least, this is what Job thought, and it discomposed him.

The horses pounded along the snowy road, and the air was keen as a blade. Familiar landmarks were left behind on this side and that, and they drew near to home.

"How is my uncle, Job?" said Arnold, presently.

"Paas'n," answered Job; "way, Paas'n Paul be abed, wi' a zight worse coold en es 'ead nor wut I've a gatten." And Job was going on to enlarge upon the unprecedented illness of Parson Paul, when Paul himself—fourteen stone ten if an ounce, with a complexion like a plum, his gun on his shoulder, and a great fat hare in his hand—made his appearance at the corner of a lane, and bellowed in amazement at sight of Arnold on top of the afternoon coach.

Now, to explain why Parson Paul was here with his gun, his hare, and his unique complexion, instead of being—where he should have been—in bed, with a poultice; and to explain, besides, his astonishment on seeing Arnold, it is necessary to go back a step or two in the narrative.

And, first, it should be said that though Mr. Trimble had given Arnold to understand that he intended immediately to telegraph to his friends at home, he judiciously forgot to do so until within an hour or so of the time when he supposed Arnold would be at the end of his journey. Consequently, though there was a telegram for the vicar lying at the Vicarage at this moment, the vicar knew nothing about it, and was totally unprepared for Arnold's arrival. No one at home, in fact, looked for him on this more than on any other day, for Arnold himself had purposely avoided writing.

About five days before this, Parson Paul had gone out to see the hunt. When Paul went a-hunting, it was not to look at the horses, nor at the gentlemen in their red coats and whisky-flasks, nor at the hounds in full cry over a level field; but if he could get a glimpse of the fox, it thrilled him from head to foot. He knew to a yard where Pug would break, and what line he would take, and on this particular day when they were drawing a covert a mile or so from the Vicarage, Paul was hiding within twenty feet of where he knew the fox would come out, pressed against the trunk of a tree as flat as his bigness would allow. But he waited so long, with a miserable wind playing all round him, that he got chilled to the bones, and in two days he had a raging cold, and was sneezing great guns during all the waking hours. On the third day Ann Hanoch, with uncommon difficulty, got him to bed; for she said that if he grew worse he could not preach on Sunday, and she knew he would not let the parish hear he was kept abed on Sunday with a cold in his head.

On the fourth day the cold seemed as if it would settle on his chest, and he lay in bed dosing himself with anathemas, and rating the whole parish, beginning with the weather-cock on the steeple, and proceeding downward, without deviation or stoppage, until he finished with the ale-house keeper, who always went poaching on Sunday morning. His gun was on the window-ledge beside him, his eye ranged over the garden and fields, and Ann Hanoch was making a horrid great poultice in the kitchen.

Presently a hungry hare crept through the hedge in the field next the garden, and came with stealthy leaps toward the shrubbery. Parson Paul was bolt upright in his bed in a twinkling, looking all round the room for his boots. He took

another glance at the hare; she leaped into the shrubbery, and Parson Paul leaped out of bed.

Dressing himself as if he were late for church, he caught up the gun, and let himself out, and if you had seen him going down the stairs so as not to disturb Ann Hanoch in the kitchen, you might have thought he meant mischief to his own plate-basket.

The hare scuttled as the vicar stepped into the garden, but he stalked her for a mile, and shot her just before the coach came up.

Five minutes after he had gone out, Mr. Trimble's telegram arrived, and Ann Hanoch took it upstairs. She was a slow woman, though very well principled and not easily amazed, but she returned down-stairs at some speed, holding the balusters as she went.

"Is it you, Arnold boy, is it you? And never a word to warn us!" exclaimed his uncle, when Job had reined in alongside the vicar. "Yes, it is the lad himself, as I'm a good Churchman! What, you look pale and thin, boy; no matter, we'll have you well again in a week—here's diet for you. Ha, ha! Ho, ho, ho!" and Paul held up the hare and shook it at him.

"But, uncle, I thought you had a terrible bad cold," laughed Arnold.

"Why, so I had, my boy, so I had. And I had a fifty-pound legacy once; but if you ask me where they are now, I don't know. Ho, ho, ho! Drive on Job, he looks cold, poor lad; I'll be up with you at the gate. Oh, yes, I had a terrible bad— Ho, ho, ho!"

At the gate stood Ann Hanoch with a telegram in her hand and a look of alarm on her face, for she had scoured the house and garden without finding her master. But she forgot her master when she saw Arnold. She had heard that he had been ill, and was all concern for him, but asked with proper severity what business he had to be riding on the outside of a coach, with frost in the air and snow upon the ground.

He got less scolding than he deserved, though, for the vicar came up just then, and the rest of it was transferred to him. But for the hare, which he tendered as a peace-offering, Parson Paul would have come off badly.

"Uncle, where are *they?*" were Arnold's first words when they were in the house.

"Ay, ay, my boy! to be sure; I'll go fetch them," said the vicar. "We'll make a night of it, I can tell you! You there, Ann Hanoch and Keturah, my servants, set on some stew or fry immediately, and let Keturah step round to John Finch for the loan of his punch-bowl, which will look well on the sideboard, though we sha'n't need to use it."

"I must go with you, Uncle Paul, if you are going to the Vineyard," exclaimed Arnold.

But Ann Hanoch, hearing this, stepped in and put her foot down, and it added some weight to an argument, and said he should not go out a step that night, not for all the sweethearts in the parish.

Parson Paul said that if one man who was stout and growing old could go out and shoot hares with a cold in his head and on his chest, another man who was neither stout nor old, and had had nothing worse than a low fever, could step a few hundred yards to look at his sweetheart, whom he had not seen for the best part of a year. And before they had finished expounding, Keturah had done some cooking on her own account in the kitchen, and the moon had risen.

But Parson Paul and Arnold came off second best in the argument, and it ended in the vicar's starting off alone to fetch Marian and the lieutenant to the Vicarage.

Arnold was left alone, and I can't say whether I would like to have been in his place or not, for there were so many conflicting thoughts in him, soothing and tormenting, and plaguing and comforting, and confounding, and pulling him this way and that, that he himself could not have answered you plainly whether he felt himself the most miserable or the happiest of men.

There came a noise of feet crunching the gravel walk, from which the snow had been swept by Keturah shortly after eight that morning.

Arnold rushed to the porch, and out of the shade of the trees which overhung the drive stepped a slender, comely figure, and a voice called him by name.

"Arnold!" it said; "Arnold!"

It was a woman's voice, and Arnold caught Marian in his arms and took her to him, and kissed her; and it seemed from the repetition of the sound as though she kissed him too.

Paul and the lieutenant were hard behind, but when Paul

saw what was taking place, or going to take place, in the porch, he faced about, and pulled the lieutenant about too, and laid his hand on the sleeve of the lieutenant's coat and directed his attention to the moon, and said:

"Have you observed this moon to-night, Lem? It is a very fine moon, and worth looking at; I don't ask you to do anything else."

He looked over his shoulder, and saw that Marian and Arnold were going into the house.

"They are going in," said Paul, still keeping his hand on the lieutenant's arm. "They would like to be alone for awhile. I dare say they would like to be alone for five minutes or so, as they have not met for nearly a year. Suffer them, my friend Lem, for they are young and you and I are old, and must console ourselves with something else. Let us console ourselves with this moon, which, as I have said, and as you can see for yourself, is a very fine moon."

But what did either of those two old men care about the moon?

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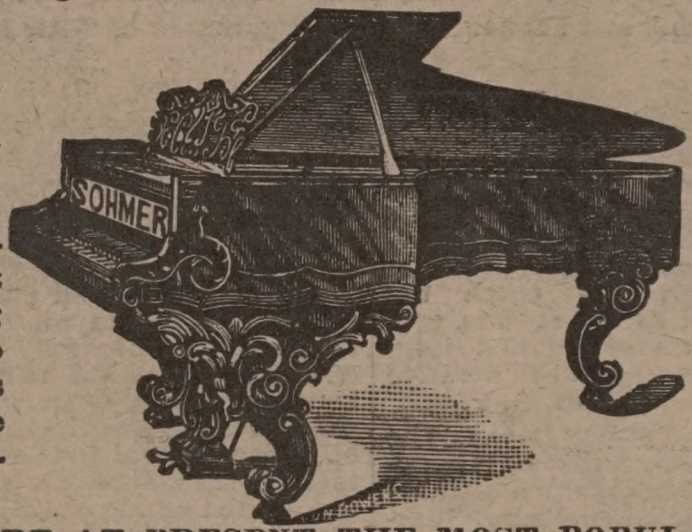

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